

A CONGREGATION'S MOTIVATION BEHIND VOTING AS
IT RELATES TO THEIR MORAL OBLIGATION
AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

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A FINAL PROJECT DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
TROTWOOD, OHIO

May 2008

**United Theological Seminary
Trotwood, Ohio**

**Faculty Approval Page
Doctor of Ministry Final Project Dissertation**

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ABSTRACT

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The project purpose was to determine the value a congregation placed on political voting and whether it impacted their sense of moral responsibility and community participation. The project span was from May 2006 – December 2006. The methodology included survey questions, interviews and a memoir. The findings revealed that the participants recognized a theological significance in voting. The voter mobilization effort influenced the participants' passion for the community embracing a better quality of life through the power of the vote. The conclusion was that the parishioners view voting as a moral obligation and an effective tool for community transformation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ultimate acknowledgement goes to Christ, who is my Lord and Savior. I also recognize my wife, Chimelle, and children Kendra, Britnie, Stephen, Candace, and Vanessa for their encouragement and understanding. My parents Francis and Opotre, and my brothers Francis Jr., Michael, Maurice, and Phillip have been my anchors of support as well.

Three other families played a major role in this project: (1). the United Theological Seminary staff, mentors, faculty, faculty advisor, and peer group; (2). the Professional Associates and Context Associates; and (3). the Industrial Areas Foundation staff persons, principally, Ari Lipman and Jonathan Lang.

I wish to acknowledge my good friends George Whitfield, Chaplain, Colonel Wilfred R. Bristol, and George Blood for their insight, inspiration and cherished friendship. Vanessa Tolliver championed this work by her unrelenting support during this process.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the tireless work of Reverend Michael Johnson who introduced the Doctor of Ministry Program to me and others and expended much ingenuity to assure that the West Ohio Conference was well represented. A special thanks goes to Ethel Johnson who served as an excellent facilitator and leader during the course of this project. There is much appreciation for the financial support of the West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church under the leadership of Bishop Bruce R. Ough. Also, the Asbury North United Methodist Church officers and members have been extraordinarily resourceful, supportive and patient throughout this entire process as well.

PREFACE

One of the remarkable revelations about this study was the fact that all of the members participating believed voting had a direct correlation with their sense of morality. Many had experienced a time in the not too distant past in which voting was not a right. They remembered their own personal struggles and the struggles of their parents to become a voice in the public arena.

The participants in this study were highly motivated to make a difference in their community through a nonpartisan voter turnout effort that emphasized critical issues as opposed to political personalities. They were also motivated by the notion that unequal treatment of poor versus rich communities adversely affected the participation of the economically disadvantaged in the electoral process.

To see approximately forty percent of the congregation attending rallies and training sessions, collaborating with other community stakeholders about prioritizing concerns and organizing strategies, attempting to get out the vote through phone bank and door to door campaigns, and spending hours at the polls to assist persons experiencing voting obstacles was an electrifying point in time to behold. I simply wanted to know the story behind this phenomenon.

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INTRODUCTION

The Asbury North United Methodist Church congregation has a rich history of community involvement. Members were always involved with various community activities to assist their neighbors. Asbury has actively fought to preserve community cultural landmarks; has provided daycare services for children during the summer months at a nominal fee; has worked on projects to provide housing for the economically disadvantaged and has a Life Care Alliance Program to provide economical lunches for the elderly as well as various entertainment activities.

The church's seniors, who constitute a large percentage of the congregation, have reached a slowing down period in their maturing years. Many of the parishioners at one time lived within the neighborhood near the church. The influx of white people coupled with tension in the street has caused many to move out of the community into satellite suburban areas in Columbus. Within the last 10 years, the level of community participation dwindled. Membership attendance began to drop off and church growth became stagnant. The church's population was beginning to decline and the sense of becoming closed off from the community surrounding the church was becoming evident. Rapid racial and cultural changes were prevalent. Young adult and older established whites were buying houses like hotcakes. In other words, a lot of the church's missions began to suffer due to the maturing age of the congregation and the loss of collaboration between the church and the community.

The congregation met on a Sunday afternoon to discuss what politicians could provide for the improvement of the community. The areas of concern were quality education, health care, jobs, and a decent living wage. The congregation also identified a

problem that some of the elderly community members were experiencing. They were encountering an inability to pay for both escalating cost of living expenses and property taxes, which resulted in a lot of them losing their homes. The church leaders formed a coalition with the Industrial Areas Foundation, a Sal Alinsky community organizing model designed to address issues and transform communities. The researcher recognizes that, although Alinsky was alleged to have been a communist and therefore a controversial figure, his community organizing strategies are highly acclaimed by community activists to this day.

This study examined what motivated a congregation to become active within their church and community context, what type of emphasis did the congregation put on voting, and whether they felt a moral obligation to vote as a means of enhancing the lives of their neighbors.

When speaking of moral obligation as it pertains to voting, the author draws the distinction between morality and ideology. He views morality as that sense of integrity driven by a deep love and concern for others as opposed to one's self-interests. For instance, in Acts 5:29 Luke writes "But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than any human authority.'"¹ The directive of God through the understanding of and obedience to scriptures bears a higher precedence over the ideology of humankind. The author stressed to the congregation the significance of voting as a means of making the kingdom of God's love known on earth. In other words, exercising the right to vote could literally influence politicians to treat their constituents right. It could also serve as a means of transforming communities. On the other hand, the researcher views ideology as

¹ Acts 5:29

Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

that thought that channels, directs or points an individual, faction or group from more or less a motive of self-interest. He believes that telling the congregation who to vote for or what issues they must support would be forcing his ideas upon the people as opposed to letting them decide for themselves. However, sharing such moral values as being our brothers/sisters keeper, advocating for justice and equality, and embracing the indigent and paving the way for their welfare and constructive growth, is the standard for morality.

Romans 13:8 records the Apostle Paul's assertion to "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law."² The researcher sees this text as a moral obligation to love others rather than to view and treat others from an ideological self-interest approach. Encouraging others to vote embraces the empowerment of the electorate to take control of their lives and to transform their communities from despair and neglect to happiness and consideration. So the researcher views the moral obligation to vote as a selfless means of exercising one's love for the beloved community.

The writer maintains that ideology has the potential to pit liberals against conservatives or visa versa. Often, positions of traditionalism against change or equality against inequality can stalemate the actions of government and discourage the electorate. Ideological positions such as abortion, same sex marriage and immigration are alone serving to polarize our nation and divide our people. Some self-interest religious groups have resorted to murdering those who have a lifestyle unfamiliar to their own. This kind of ideology has crept into many Christian denominations and independent churches and

² Romans 13:8

has served to create a culture of dos and don'ts as opposed to loving tolerance and understanding.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Many peer groups in the Doctor of Ministry Program at United Theological Seminary are formed around a particular ministry focus and theory. Since the researcher's peer group was a blended group bringing together both mentors and peers with a variety of interests and foci, the ministry focus and project arose out of the synergy between the researcher's life story and the context of his present ministry. This chapter describes this process of discovery.

Spiritual Autobiography

The writer is the son of Francis William Herndon, Sr. and Opatre Lee Herndon and the next to the youngest of four brothers: Francis Jr., Michael, Maurice and his youngest brother, Phillip. He is a native of Kansas City, Kansas and was raised in the twin city of Kansas City, Missouri.

It was the summer of his junior year in high school that the author responded to the love of God by acknowledging Christ as his Lord and Savior. He was attending a camp at Silver Cliff Ranch in the mountains. It had an outdoor hot steam pool, cabins, a beautiful lodge, and a vast area for fun and games. The ranch was located in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The camp experience was hosted by the Young Life

regional staff that ministered to Young Life Clubs throughout the United States. The author is indebted to George Blood for spiritually nurturing him before and after his conversion experience.

The author's father once told him that, since his return home from the Young Life camp, he noticed a striking difference in attitude and disposition. He said that he thought the faith experience was a good thing. This was most meaningful to the author in that his father never discussed matters of faith with him, the family or anyone.

When the writer attended High School, some of the growing pains in the world of injustice, prejudice and racism gave him a deeper appreciation of accountability to those brothers and sisters who are powerless and without a voice. To name a few of many incidents, the author recalls that in the late 1960s a small group of African Americans attended Southeast High School in Kansas City, Missouri. The population at the school was composed of predominantly white administrators, teachers and students.

The author recalls the time when several neighborhood African American youth would meet at one another's residence to strategize on ways they would get to school and back without being physically harmed. The nightmare of carloads of low income white dropouts hurling their chains, bottles and bats was a daily reality. The agitators would shout out offensive names and then scream "go back to Africa." This day after day occurrence was never covered by the media nor were there any police around for protection. The writer not only felt vulnerable to the evil behavior of others, but he also experienced a sense of powerlessness. He felt as if he were a voice in the wilderness.

One day when the author entered the High School cafeteria for lunch, he noticed huge poster pictures of African faces hanging on the pillars from one end to the other.

They were graphic pictures depicting enormous earrings looming from earlobes and piercing through the nose of each face with a caption at the bottom of each poster saying “Africans Go Home.” This deep sense of rejection was met with no resistance from his football and track teammates or from any white high school student.

The author further noticed that the principal of the school sauntered through the cafeteria gazing at the posters as if he was in a museum. He then strolled back to his office leaving the posters in place. While just a few were involved in the hate display of posters, the writer thought that the silent majority bore equal responsibility. He learned from this and other incidents that the lack of involvement of the majority can support the demise of the minority.

In the spring of 1971, the writer graduated from Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon. The writer went to work with the Young Life Organization, while employed him as a Minority Advisor in the Wichita, Kansas Public School System. During this same period in the early 1970s, he pursued a Masters of Science Degree in Counselor Education at Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas.

Amid these personal pursuits, the author would again experience harsh social disorder, prejudice and racism as a result of the forced busing federal mandate in the public schools throughout the United States. The mandate was intended to resolve the problems of segregation and inequitable education between white and black students. The author saw the violent reaction of white youth and their parents toward the influx of African American students. In the meantime, the black neighborhood schools were closed, thereby offering black students only one alternative, which was to be forcibly bussed to predominantly white schools.

Similarly there were many black youth and parents who were angry. They were annoyed over the closing of their neighborhood schools where they enjoyed ethnic dominance, full participation and involvement, academic achievement, and supportive relationships with the predominantly black teachers and administrators. The black youth were suddenly thrust into a hostile environment where they no longer held positions of esteem in their schools and communities. The author recognized this to be an integration attempt gone bad.

Through the grace of God, the author he met a teacher who helped him with the students. George Whitfield, a recent graduate and football player of Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas, was a first year History and Government teacher in the same school in which the author was employed. They became good friends and assumed the challenge of resolving the problem of an extremely negative school environment filled with a prevailing climate of hostility and violence.

Through much prayer and reflection the author and Mr. Whitfield set out to achieve certain objectives, focusing on transforming relationships through participation and interaction. The first objective was to get to know the youth individually and address their needs. Second, they sought to identify influential minority youth leaders to help them meet other troubled youth impacted by forced bussing throughout the Wichita Public School System. Third, they planned to provide the space necessary for the youth to address their concerns about forced bussing. Fourth, the author and George set out to provide opportunities for black and white students to get to know one another in order to resolve matters of gross racial stereotypes and prejudice. Fifth, they got to know the parents of black and white students for the purpose of familiarizing them with the

program of reconciliation and their attempt to positively impact black and white relationships.

The program blossomed. Four to five hundred African American students met with the author and Mr. Whitfield on a regular basis until interacting groups were formed within each school in the Wichita Public School System. Discussions, role-playing, a theatrical play, and cross-cultural home exchange experiences served to increase the participation of African American youth in student body government and activities. Fears and stereotypes were addressed and a positive atmosphere evolved among black and white students in the schools. The smothering air of negativity was transformed into an environment of constructive relationships and acceptance.

Increased minority participation reaped a harvest of black student body presidents, cheerleaders and constructive involvement in the schools. Black and white students became genuine friends and showed a higher level of achievement in the classroom environment. The author gained a valuable insight from this experience. He learned that community organizing, interaction, and active participation can transform communities from fear and hatred to understanding, compassion and offer genuine relationships.

Following graduation, the author was offered a position as Executive Director of Teacher Corps where he supervised Masters Degree Students of education to engage in Inner City Community Based Projects at Wichita State University. After a year, he felt God pulling him toward the ministry and elected to resign his position in order to attend Payne Theological Seminary in Wilberforce, Ohio, the oldest black institution of higher learning in the United States.

During the second year of his matriculation at this African Methodist Episcopal Church Seminary, the author was preparing to drop out due to a lack of finances. When he went to the mail box to retrieve the mail, there was a letter from an elderly man, Mr. Ed Dorsett, who said that if the writer were ever to go to Seminary that he would offer his support. Before going to the Academic Dean's Office to break the news of his decision to drop out, the writer decided to open the letter. It was a wonderful letter of encouragement. Enclosed was a check for \$900 dollars, which was just enough to complete the tuition requirement for the year. The author again recognized the wondrous work of the Lord in his life, as well as the affirmation that what he was doing was pleasing to God.

The writer believes that it is supremely important to follow God's will and to continue to answer the call to be a prophetic voice in the public square. He graduated from Payne Theological Seminary and went into the fulltime ministry serving for twenty-five years as an ordained itinerant elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. On July 1, 2004, the writer took up ministry in The United Methodist Church and was later officially transferred into the West Ohio Conference, serving as pastor of Asbury North United Methodist Church, Columbus, Ohio.

Context

This context of the ministry is Asbury North United Methodist Church located northeast of downtown Columbus, Ohio in the 43203 zip code area. Asbury gained the reputation of a flagship congregation over a period from 1862 to the present. In 1862 while inside the home of John R. and Lucy Smith, a group of sixteen gathered for prayer

and worship. This fellowship became the first Methodist Episcopal Church for African Americans in Columbus, Ohio. As this Christian family grew it moved to other homes and eventually moved to a log cabin type structure on Donaldson Street. From 1862 to 1884, six ministers served these dedicated members. The city now calls the original site Washington Street.

During the 1890's, the Miller Estate bequeathed a lot on the corner of Donaldson and Eleventh Streets (now know as Lehman Street) on which to erect a church. Mr. J.W. Brown purchased a small white framed building for \$200 and moved it to the lot. The church believes that the white framed edifice is the original Broad Street Methodist Church. However, Broad Street's church history refers to it as the Donaldson Street Church. The Lexington Conference continued to send the most capable and zealous ministers to this church for the next 24 years.

The pastorate of Reverend S. M. Riley, Jr. (1942-1944), changed the church's name to Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church in honor of Senior Bishop Francis Asbury. Reverend Frank R. Arnold, pastor from 1949-1961, began negotiations for a new church because of the growing congregation. In November 1953, the church purchased the Nelson Memorial Presbyterian Church at Clifton and Parkwood Avenues. In October 1957, Bishop Matthew W. Clair, Jr. presided over the dedication and mortgage burning of the church building.

The congregation purchased a six-room brick dwelling at 1566 Granville Street in September 1961 and used the home as the parsonage for Reverend and Mrs. McCallum. Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church began its second hundred years by merging with the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church. Hence, the name changed to

Asbury North United Methodist Church, under the esteemed pastorate of Reverend Joseph Aldridge (1963–1969). Reverend and Mrs. Thomas Durr spurred new life into Asbury during their years at the church (1969–1977) by developing new programs and a flourishing youth ministry.

During Reverend Richard Allen Dunbar's pastorate (1986–1995), the church prospered spiritually and embarked upon successful outreach ministries. During his nine years of leadership Asbury's outreach program expanded, the music program strengthened and, in 1990, the church constructed and dedicated the current church building located immediately to the east of downtown Columbus, Ohio. Succeeding Reverend Dunbar's pastorate was Reverend Wynston Edward Dixon who was appointed pastor of the Asbury North UM Church family in June 1995. Under his leadership the membership increased, a college scholarship program was established, and the congregation burned the mortgage in May 2000. Dr. Henry C. Stringer, Ph.D., became pastor of the Asbury congregation on July 1, 2000. After four years of continued the pastorate, Bishop Bruce Ough, presiding prelate of the West Ohio Conference, appointed Dr. Stringer to serve as the District Superintendent of the Columbus South District. July 1, 2004 (Church Archives on file at Asbury North United Methodist Church, Columbus, Ohio).

Subsequently, Bishop Ough appointed the researcher, a transfer from The African Methodist Episcopal Church, to serve as pastor of the Asbury North United Methodist Church and in due course officially transferred into the West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church.

The local charge is presently restructuring to address four core process ministry areas of ministry: (1) Radical Hospitality; (2) Passionate Worship; (3) Faith-forming Relationships; and (4) Risk taking Service and Missions.

Columbus became Ohio's permanent capital in 1816. The state capital known as a center for political, economic and cultural activity is today one of the fastest growing cities in the east central United States. The Columbus downtown area underwent a complete transformation in the 1990s, and the economy surged as high technology development and research companies moved into the metropolitan area. Franklin County, which includes the local church context, saw its population historically top three-quarters of a million for the first time in the 2000 census.¹

The Near East Side Community has a rich cultural history as well. The Near East was defined as zip codes 43203 and 43205. This area borders Conrail/I-670 on the north, I-70 on the south, Alum Creek on the east, and I-71 on the west. Asbury North United Methodist Church is located in the context of the 43203 zip code area.² In the early 1920s, this area known as the birthplace of the jazz movement in Columbus, included an array of theaters, hotels, businesses, and the residential estates of eminent community leaders of that time.

By 1950, much of the housing stock that had served the wealth of the prior generation was showing indications of deterioration. Many older homes were subdivided into apartments or rooming dwellings. In the 1950s, the Eastgate Subdivision, a suburban type residential neighborhood located in the Near East area was constructed.

¹ See Table 1, US 2000 Census, Columbus, OH.

² Figure 1 Map of Context Area

During the 1960s, construction of interstate highways cleared vast sections of the Near East area, thereby reducing a significant amount of housing stock and forcing many families and residents to relocate. Subsequently, the community experienced a period of readjustment. To this day, the freeways play a key role in the isolation of the Near East area from the surrounding city and its various kinds of services. Also during the 1960s, the Model Cities Program further increased the severity of this isolation by means of the destruction and demolition of housing stock in the community.

The area experienced extraordinary social strife when portions of the Near East area suffered the reduction of additional housing stock to arson and vandalism. Quaint brick streets were paved, and many residents and businesspersons fled the violence in the late 1960s that was a period of civil rights strife all over the nation. Like many inner city areas across America, the Near East experienced an economic down slide in the 1960s and 1970s due to highway expansion, racial violence, and the development of suburban shopping centers.

The Near East Community is not a single neighborhood. It is composed of several smaller neighborhoods, including Bronzeville, Eastgate, Olde Towne East, Franklin Park, and Woodland Park (the Woodland Park Neighborhood Association meets monthly in the Heritage Hall of the Asbury North United Methodist Church). Each neighborhood bears its own identity.

Once a historically African American community, the contemporary Near East Community is increasingly diverse. A greater number of people of different ethnicities, cultures and divergent socio-economic status are living side by side. Conversely, many residents in the Near East Community have considerable needs and few resources to

address those needs. Populations of particular concern include young single mothers and their children, the elderly, and people with very low income.

Presently, there is an influx (gentrification) of affluent white males moving into certain sectors of the Near East Community, particularly the Woodland Park area which includes the immediate context of the local church. The new residents are purchasing, and renovating old rundown houses and properties. Today, it is essential that both parents work outside of the household to meet the necessary economic demands of society.

The Church's immediate neighborhood has gone through several significant transformations within the past century. The Near Eastside of Columbus has historically been an African American community. However, the area within the vicinity of our Church's geographical context area has changed from a predominantly middle class white community to a middle class black community to an economically disadvantaged black community to, finally, through a gentrification process, a reintroducing of middle class whites into a predominantly black community.³

Meanwhile, crime, gangs, drugs and other social negatives co-exist with this social dynamic. This gives the Asbury North United Methodist Church family the opportunity to incorporate ministries that will positively affect various families, particularly in the Woodland Park area. The church family elected to engage in Faith Vote Columbus, a voter mobilization drive, in order to effect positive changes in the community.

Willis Brown is chairperson of the Asbury North Social Action Committee. According to an interview conducted by the Context Associates, Willis Brown lives in

³ Information provided from ANUMC parishioner, Mrs. Edmundson, who has been a 40 year resident within the Asbury North Community.

the 43203 zip code area, but lives outside of the boundaries of the designated context area.

Mr. Brown informed the Committee that there were two people living within his home. There are no school-aged children in his home. He has been a resident since 1987 and has a good relationship with his neighbors, stating that he knew his neighbors well.

Mr. Brown reflected upon the changes within his community over the years. He said that there was not as much crime within the community. The community was much cleaner than before in regards to litter on the streets and a sense of a community pride and ownership has developed.

Mr. Willis stated that Asbury North at one time had a reputation of being a flagship church within the community. The congregation in the 1960s consisted of professional judges, lawyers, teachers and business owners. The Eastgate community, which partially exists within the context area, was where many of the professionals lived. Many of these persons are now deceased and, as a result, the church lost direct connections with vital resources to assist the community. However, during that time the Asbury Church was noted to be the mother church of all the African-American United Methodist Churches within the West Ohio Conference. Asbury members were deeply entrenched in the leadership structure of the Western Ohio Conference and highly regarded by both white and black United Methodist leaders. Currently, more than 90% of the Asbury North United Methodist Church members live outside of the context area, which is reflected by Graph 16,⁴ which identifies the zip codes of thirty members of the church who participated in the Faith Vote Columbus initiative.

⁴ Graph Question #16 What Zip Code Do You Live In.

The moral fiber of our society drastically changed during the 20th century. For instance, it was normal for a household to contain both parents and children (See Table 2).⁵ Men were the primary contributors to the survival and stability of the family structure by means of predominant work outside of the home.

Women had the primary domestic responsibilities of nurturing family needs by means of work inside of the home in an attempt to provide a healthy environment for family development. Seemingly, these general roles within the family structure were both necessary and vital in providing for a seamless unit of a stable environment for the children coupled with a stable foundation for the family structure. Subsequently, these distinct roles defined by gender within the family structure did not transform at the same rate as the evolution of the economic and societal needs of the family in America.⁶ Today, it is essential that both parents work outside of the household to meet the necessary economic demands of society. The Bureau of Labor statistics have compiled data of the change in the demographics of the workforce from 1950 and projected these to 2050. These statistics show an ever growing trend of the percentage of women entering the workforce has increased by approximately 257% between 1950 and 2000.⁷

The majority of the Asbury North United Methodist congregation no longer resides within a specific geographical boundary of the surrounding neighborhood. Families have left the confines of the inner city and are migrating into the new developing townships outside of the inner city. Long commutes and extended working

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Reports, Series CENSR-4, *Demographic Trends in the 20th Century*, Table 15 Hobbs and Stoops

⁶ "Women's History in America," Women's International Center, <http://www.wic.org/misc/history.htm>, (accessed March 16, 2006).

⁷ Toossi, Mitra (2002). A century of change: the US Labor force 1950-2050, *Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. 125, No. 5, Pages 15-28, Washington, DC.

hours make it more and more difficult for the congregation to have complete and fulfilling participation in church and community activities. Additionally, many of the parishioners do not live within the neighborhood community. Therefore, it is difficult to nurture a neighborhood relationship between the church membership and the families within the surrounding community. This is a prevailing factor among the churches within the inner city communities.

The community stakeholders, those rendering services in the church and community context, were not collectively having an effect on the productive potential of the family. This presented the need for transformational relationships to occur. Asbury North United Methodist Church partnered with other community stakeholders. There was a twofold purpose for the collaboration: (1). to discuss, negotiate and resolve the major concerns of the community; and (2). to get the politicians to adopt the concerns for their campaign platforms and to be held accountability to the people who later organized to call themselves Faith Vote Columbus.

The spiritual ethos of the Asbury North UM Church is that it is a warm, hospitable, inclusive and just congregation. This membership once had a dynamic hand in the life of the community. They are anxious to rekindle this objective. Their love for God and people coupled with the desire to experience spiritual maturity is a top priority.

Adopted by the church in 2004 and remaining relevant to date is:

The Church Theme

Loving God, Serving People
(Inspired by Mark 12:30, 31)

The Mission Statement

To seek, save and nurture the lost, and to enrich, redeem and revive the found.
(Inspired by Luke 9:10)

The Vision Statement

That out of our love for God and humankind, God's word shall increase, and the number of disciples shall multiply, as we remain obedient to the faith.
(Inspired by Acts 6:7)

Synergy

As a product of the Civil Rights Movement, the author's eyes have been awakened to the ills of the society. Through the means of community organizing and collaborating with diverse groups, the writer was encouraged that voices truly mattered. A cultural evolution of apathy, lethargy and powerlessness had negatively impacted Christian congregations throughout the United States of America. Today, the writer asserts that the Church, like Jonah (Jonah, chapters 1-3), is running away from the call to be a prophetic witness in the public arena.

Luke records Jesus as saying in Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."⁸ The likelihood of this experience seems to be a rarity in today's society. It seems as though the Church has increasingly become isolated from the power of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the explanation might rest with the fact that many Protestant Churches are refraining from a sense of advocacy on the behalf of the disadvantaged, the indigent and the oppressed.

⁸ *NRSV HARPER STUDY BIBLE*, (Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), Acts 1:8.

Perhaps the Church has been bitten by that prevailing capitalistic bug that suggests that the almighty dollar drives, determines and defines mission ministry as opposed to simply addressing human peril by advocating for justice, equality and dignity. Isolation from mainstream society is a double-edged sword, with racial mistrust and prejudice on one edge of the sword and fear and apathy making up the other edge.

Politicians, both black and white, have made promises with little fulfillment of the same. Four decades have passed since the universal suffrage of African Americans and women. Even though the blood of many was shed during the Civil Rights movement, the writer asserts that voter turnout within predominately African-American and low-income communities has been on average low. Economic disparity between the races has not been adequately bridged. Encouraging people to be responsible for their society and making those we elect into office accountable to the people may be the mechanism needed to break the downward societal spiral particularly encountered by people of color and the poor. If the Church is going to be the Church, then she must allow herself to be inspired, uplifted and directed by the power of the Holy Spirit in order to be prophetic witnesses in the public square. Community organizing and turning out the vote might very well be a cause for ministry within the contemporary church.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY PROJECT

Voter participation and mobilization can serve as a community organizing tactic to transform critical conditions in society. There is an abundance of literature on community organizing and activism. I have reviewed some of the known thinkers and writers in the field of community organizing to effect change.

Rules for Radicals was the last book written by Saul D. Alinsky prior to his death in 1972. The book describes Alinsky's attempt to provide a record of his theory and methods of organizing community activists. Alinsky realized that the ability to change society to bring about equity among the masses was a battle that had to be fought upon both the moral and secular battle fields. This suggests that the ability to organize people for the purpose of mutual societal gains results in a community that accommodates the needs of all the people and not a select few. Alinsky's organizing approaches focused on the apathy of a young generation that has the ability to discern the truth about the culture that was bequeathed to them from their parents if given proper direction and therefore may be used to effect significant social change within the community.¹

Alinsky's work encouraged this project to notice the interaction of church and community. The voter turnout campaign required both groups to organize together for the common good of society. The uniting coagulate behind the common good among the

¹ Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* (Vintage Books Publishers, 1971), 20 - 25.

church and community are those passionate issues including universal health care, equitable education, protection of pensions, and property tax relief for seniors. The community organizing strategy united both camps behind these issues and demanded accountability from elected officials toward the resolution of these matters of interest.

In Doctor Claud Anderson's book, *Black Labor, White Wealth*, there is an examination of methods used by whites to gain power and he suggests that blacks build wealth and power within their communities by adopting the same tools used for oppression. The book offers actions that blacks can take to become politically and economically competitive in America.² Here again community organizing is a critical tool for transformation. However, repeating social practices of the oppressors of the past does not necessarily bring genuine creativity and engagement of a people of the present.

The writer believes that community organizing strategies must come from the people and must be for the benefit of all people and not just a segment of people. The Faith Vote Columbus effort involved people of all ethnic and religious backgrounds. Moreover, the nonpartisan get out the vote campaign received remarkable respect from the voting population because there was not appeal for a particular candidate from any party affiliation. This allowed the participants to focus on the significance of voting and the possibility for a positive transformation in the community.

Marcus J. Borg added greatly to the writer's understanding of the culture of Christ as compared to contemporary society. It drove home the moral responsibility of the masses to vote lest the government is left in the hands of a few. Borg's book, *JESUS*:

² Claud Anderson, *Black Labor, White Wealth* (Edgewood, MD: Duncan & Duncan, Inc. Publishers, 1994), 108 - 153.

Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary, consists of societal analogies that are relevant to today's culture. Borg provides a detailed explanation of society and culture during the time of Christ. This book provides biblical references of the Major and Minor Prophets. They spoke of the coming transformation of Judaic society. It was a society that had been subjected to a two-class society. This was the result of the culture's transformation from a government by a god or priests to a state ruled by a monarchy. During the time of Christ, the monarchy eventually evolved into the rule of a small group of people governing on the sole basis of self interest in the states of Rome.³

Borg caused the writer to recognize that participatory political involvement can essentially guard against small group rule and dominance. The Faith Vote Columbus voter mobilization effort encouraged an oftentimes apathetic populace to recognize that voting can serve as a deterrent to those who might otherwise govern out of self interest.

Mohandas K. Gandhi's *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* shows that this major spiritual leader and civil activist in India and South Africa during the early 1900's until his assassination in 1948 literally transformed a nation. His constant search for truth led to his development of a passive, nonviolent social movement, which eventually resulted in the independence of India from Great Britain. His philosophy of nonviolence, which he calls Satyagraha (an effort to discover, discern, obtain or apply the truth), continues to influence nonviolent resistance movements to this day. Through his meditation, prayer and fasting Gandhi was able to recognize the truth that included not only the ability to see through the manipulations of governments to

³ Marcus J. Borg, *JESUS: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary* (San Francisco: Harper Publishers, 2006), 300 – 309.

control millions of his countrymen, but also the ability to detect the inner truths regarding his personal character and growth. Gandhi realized that in order to effect change in a society, it was necessary to put God first in his life and to provide a spiritual awareness that would eventually lead people into the light of the truth in their dealings with one another.⁴

This brilliant work suggests the great contribution the people of faith can make in community organizing strategies. They can discern the truth by virtue of their spiritual centeredness with the Author of truth. They can reveal the truth by their faith orientation and separation from state. And they can advocate for truth because they recognize that politicians are servants of humankind and not the other way around.

Alexander Keyssar's work, *The Right to Vote: the Contested History of Democracy in the United States*, is a comprehensive and thorough guide through the evolution of our democracy. It wonderfully renders a point of view on many of the current issues involving voting rights. He clearly promotes the notion that Christians are entreated by God to insist that government fulfill its divine mandate to provide for freedom, peace and justice.⁵

The author of this research project has discovered that the Asbury North United Methodist Church Faith Vote Columbus participants are consistent with Keyssar from the standpoint that the electorate must vote into office those politicians who support this divine mandate. Otherwise, the government threatens to evolve into the absolute rule of a

⁴ Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1983), 415 – 449.

⁵ Alexander Keyssar, *The Right To Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 180 – 220.

few over many. The voter mobilization project is, in effect, a community organizing strategy that suggests that the vote can become the tool that protects the inalienable rights of the society as a whole.

Wayne A. Meeks' work, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, challenges the importance of understanding the socio-cultural factors during the time of the spread of early Christianity. Meeks contends that theology in itself without a comprehension of societal conditions can be incomplete. An appreciation of the historical significance of the early Christian era and mindset can assist modern day theologians. They can readily come to terms with the dynamics of proselytizing in a modern urban society.⁶

The socio-cultural condition of the community surrounding the church context enabled the researcher to discover that the registered voter turnout rate was significantly lower than other bordering communities (See Table 2, Appendix B).⁷ This revelation alone sparked the need for a higher level of community organizing tactics such as phone and door to door campaigns designed to encourage people to vote and to solicit Faith Vote Columbus volunteers.

Pointing to the main tenet of Christianity to be our neighbor's keeper, Samuel DeWitt Proctor authored a book called *The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African American Faith* that provides a chronicle of the impacts of poverty, racism, and oppression on a people. Reverend Proctor believed that faith in justice where all citizens

⁶ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 7 – 72.

⁷ Table 2 - Franklin County Ohio Board of Election, 2000 General Election, <http://vote.franklincountyohio.gov/boe/assets/pdf/2000/general/ResultsFranklinCountyGen2000.xls>, (Accessed December 11, 2007).

are equal participants runs deep through the African American experience. Proctor projected a vision that individual outreach and family rejuvenation can lead our nation on the path to a genuine community in which we are our neighbor's keepers.⁸ This book encouraged the writer to understand that the voter mobilization drive was a form of outreach that permitted an oppressed people to make a positive difference in their declining community.

Jim Wallis' book, *God's Politics*, appears to be one of the first manuscripts during this political era to question the monopoly on religion that the nation's political right has taken over the last decade. Most religious leaders, politicians, and the common man have been mute to the rhetoric espoused by the political right in this nation for fear of being called anti-American, anti-war, or anti-patriotic. This book offers a fresh perspective on how to convert spiritual values into social change without attempting to marry the church to the state.⁹ The community organizing approach used in this research project guarded against sleeping in the same bed as the state by insisting on a nonpartisan approach. The Faith Vote Columbus volunteers were asked not to campaign for individual politicians, but rather to urge voters to exercise their right to vote. The electorate was asked to vote in order to affect change in their communities.

Howard Zinn's work, *A People's History of the United States 1492–Present*, bears a perspective that varies considerably from what has usually been presented by historians who have archived the annals of our nation, particularly as it applies to universal suffrage and voter rights. Professor Zinn supports his chronologies with

⁸ Samuel DeWitt Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African American Faith* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995).

⁹ Jim Wallis, *God's Politics* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005), 297–342.

different records consisting of personal diaries, written literature of the period, newspaper reports, congressional records and other sources to present a perspective on history not generally reported. His work provides information on the nation's founders who attempted to strip the populace of their voting rights by insisting that the only ones able to vote would be those who owned land. He provides a perspective on the Women's Suffrage Movement, The Industrial Revolution, The Civil Rights Movement, legislative policies enacted into law, the impact of our nation's wars, and the result of congressional acts that have shaped our nation over the centuries. Professor Zinn uses critical teaching as a tool so that his students might understand and question dominant factors of our society.¹⁰

The author holds that Howard Zinn's work inspired his project from the standpoint that America's greatest battles: voting rights struggles particularly of blacks and women; child labor laws; and racial equality and justice were carried out at the grass roots level. The Faith Vote Columbus voter turnout mobilization campaign is in fact a grass roots movement driven by the need to address critical issues for the advancement of the disenfranchised and marginalized people of the United States of America.

Asbury North's participation in Faith Vote Columbus draws on rich traditions well developed in both Christian and American democratic life. The prophetic call for justice has always been the role of the Church and especially the African American Church.

The researcher has reviewed the writings of the above mentioned authors to investigate this theme of community organizing for the betterment of the people from a

¹⁰ Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States 1492–Present* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999), 23 – 321.

variety of perspectives. The work of Faith Vote Columbus also draws from the particular tradition of American community organizing, as first conceived by Saul Alinsky and community organizers over the past seventy years.

Alluding to unexploited power of the African Americans, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. states in his book, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* “The Negro vote presently is only a partially realized strength. It can still be doubled in the South. In the North, even where Negroes are registered in equal proportion to whites, they do not vote in the same proportions. Assailed by a sense of futility, Negroes resist participating in empty ritual. However, when the Negro citizen learns that united and organized pressure can achieve measurable results, he will make his influence felt. Out of this consciousness the political power of the aroused minority will be enhanced and consolidated.”¹¹ This book supports the researcher’s notion that participatory voting can indeed transform communities and empower people.

The key themes of the organizing tradition, as highlighted in the works of practitioners Alinsky, Michael Gecan, Edward Chambers, and academicians Charles Payne and Mark Warren include: (1). The ability of ordinary people to grow, develop, and take leadership in public life (Gecan, chapter 4)¹² and (Warren, chapter 2);¹³ (2). the urgency of building powerful organizations that can challenge existing arrangements of

¹¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967), 147.

¹² Michael Gecan, *Going Public* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 54 – 64.

¹³ Mark R. Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling: Community Building to Revitalize American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 40 – 71.

power (Chambers, chapter 7).¹⁴ (3). the capacity of the Church to provide the base for such an organization (Gecan, chapter 8)¹⁵ and (Warren, chapter 9),¹⁶ (4). the understanding that people act out of relationships and self-interest more than out of commitment to abstract principles (Warren, chapter 2)¹⁷ and (Payne, chapter 8),¹⁸ and (5). the intentionality and hard work required moving people into meaningful action without which their talents, ability, and energy will remain untapped (Payne, chapter 8).¹⁹

¹⁴ Edward T. Chambers, *Roots for Radicals: Organizing for Power, Action, and Justice* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2003), 112 – 123.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 129 – 135.

¹⁶ Mark R. Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling: Community Building to Revitalize American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 241 – 247.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 57 – 71.

¹⁸ Charles M. Payne, *I've Got The Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and The Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 236 – 264.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 236 – 264.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This project model asked what was *A Congregation's Motivation Behind Voting As It Relates To Their Moral Obligation and Community Involvement*. It is supported by a theoretical framework reflected in a review of pertinent literature. The researcher connects biblical, historical and theological foundations to the project.

The inspiring theory behind this project rested with the notion that voter turnout matters and can provide for the virtual transformation of the church, community, city, state and nation. It also afforded the church a prize opportunity for outreach in the community.

Speaking at an NAACP Convention, Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. raised an astonishing revelation. He said, "The Congressional Black Caucus met with President Bush a few months ago. Congressman Jackson asked President Bush if he would support the voting rights act extension with Section 203 and Section 5. He said he didn't know anything about it. That's an incredible response when you consider that Texas was under Voting Rights Act supervision."¹ This admission of ignorance from the President of the United States of America speaks volumes of the fact that civil rights achievements over the past forty years cannot be regarded as a done deal. Our nation can ill afford to rest on her laurels. Matters cannot be solely left in the hands of the politicians. There is a vital

¹ Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., *The Nation*. <http://www.thenation.com/blogs/actnow?pid=10441>, (Accessed November 21, 2006).

need for church and community participation around those issues that have a direct effect on the quality of life.

The writer holds that trials and tribulations could prevent millions from realizing the hope of a worthwhile future. He asserts that right before our very eyes we observe thousands of treasured lives lost and billions of dollars spent in an Iraq War that still remains unclear as to why we are there. It seems that just a few powerful people railroaded an aggressive plan of engagement. It has become a plan motivated by self-interests, a plan that has adversely effected the quality of life of the common American and Iranian citizen, a plan that has negatively impacted this nation's reputation among the nations of the world, and a plan that is causing thousands of Americans to lose hope in a democracy that historically has prided herself on a higher level of citizen participation in government than what is observed in the current state of affairs.

We see the gap between the haves and the have nots getting wider each day. We notice the unjust distribution of our nation's wealth. Daily there is not a news program or article that does not mention the harsh reality that too often there is no care for too many families and especially senior citizens and children. Rather than organizing and participating in the affairs of the public, we too often recognize a growing atmosphere of apathy and withdrawal in many communities across America.²

This complex world presents a marvelous opportunity for the church and community to make a positive difference in America's public domain. Edmund Burke once said, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do

² Anderson, *Black Labor, White Wealth*, 8 – 27.

nothing.”³ This supports the notion that community organizing is critical lest our inaction contribute to the destruction of our nation’s democracy.

The researcher contends that community organizing plays a major role in holding up the pillars of freedom and liberty in the corridors of society. Citizen participation holds politicians and power structures accountable to the people they serve. The daunting alternative is that leaving these entities unattended could virtually stifle any sense of independence, self-determination and autonomy among the people in the communities of America and throughout the world.

Saul D. Alinsky brought insight to this theory of community when he quotes Alexis de Tocqueville, a French political scientist, historian, politician and author of the acclaimed book, *Democracy in America*: “. . . unless individual citizens were regularly involved in the action of governing themselves, self-government would pass from the scene. Citizen participation is the animating spirit and force in a society predicated on voluntarism.”⁴ The Faith Vote Columbus upheld this principal of voluntarism and voter participation.

In pointing out the difference between the leader and organizer, Alinsky offers sound insight into what the concept of organizing implies. He says, “The leader goes on to build power to fulfill his desires, to hold and wield the power for purposes both social and personal. He wants power for himself. The organizer finds his goal in creation of power for others to use.”⁵ So, a community organizer is one who values independence

³ Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books Publishers, 1971), 20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

and autonomy as an indisputable right of all people. He/she organizes to instill a transforming power in others, especially the disadvantaged, in order to sustain the values of freedom and liberty.

Clarke E. Cochran in his book entitled *Religion in Public and Private Life* refers to Stanley Hauerwas, who advises that politics must progress beyond the influences of power and interests. He said, "The most basic task of any polity is to offer its people a sense of participation in an adventure. For finally what we seek is not power, or security, or equality, or even dignity, but a sense of worth gained from participation and contribution to a common adventure. Indeed, our 'dignity' derives exactly from our sense of having played a part in such a story."⁶ Admittedly, the adventure of participation is a critical aspect of community organizing. However, the church must be the conscience of the political community. She must uphold nonpartisan issues that are relevant to the fabric of this nation's democracy. For instance, the church can ill afford to ignore any issue that would have a debilitating impact on matters of freedom, liberty, justice, peace, equality, dignity and respect. Cochran puts it this way, "Religious groups have a vital part to play in cultivating this sense of adventure, for they foster participation in two ways. First, the believer participates in the story of the religious community itself. The religious community is itself a polity, with politics, policy, and authority. Second, the story of his faith community can draw him into the story of the political community. A polity of religious and political pluralism most especially needs a broader area in which the lives of all citizens are enriched by the conversation and exchange and, yes, conflict and tension among the variety of voices and stories. Religion in public and private life is the

⁶ Clarke E. Cochran, *Religion in Public And Private Life* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 188.

continual experience of this variety.”⁷ Religion meshes with community when the essence of one’s personhood is threatened to be relegated to a state of hopelessness and oppression. Any circumstance that generates an obstacle to one’s ability to be free, to enjoy a quality livelihood, and to participate in the continual framing of a democratic society requires the common association of the prophetic voice in the church with the beloved community in the public square.

The late Saul Alinsky is the founder of IAF. Alinsky was a premier pioneer of community organizing and civic participation. William Greider states in his book, *Who Will Tell the People?*, that Alinsky is “an important model for contemporary citizen politics.” Michael Sandel’s work on *Democracy’s Discontent* noted Alinsky and his successors at the Industrial Areas Foundation as representing “one of the most promising expressions” of civic participation and that Alinsky’s direct descendants are “teach[ing] residents of poor communities how to engage in effective political activity.”⁸

The Asbury North United Methodist Church family clearly views their mission statement to be closely linked to their intentions to engage in community activism and social transformation. The mission statement of this local charge is: “To seek, save and nurture the lost; and to enrich, redeem and revive the found.” While this statement encourages personal evangelism, it also is a corporate form of worship which seeks to be that prophetic voice in the public square.

This project unites with IAF in order to be that corporate body that shall promote community participation for social change. The church purports that God’s kingdom

⁷ Ibid., 188.

⁸ Sanford D. Horwitt, *Passionate Strategies* <http://www.tresser.com/alinsky.htm>, (Accessed December 4, 2006).

cannot be known or experienced on earth unless there is a continual effort to partner with the community in order to eradicate those social evils that stifle the creative and meaningful evolution of human potential. This expressed potential could in turn open the doors to mankind's relationship with the Creator of life itself.

The key to social change can be directly linked to the church partnering with the community on how to strategically engage in an effective political process of: (1) collaborating with other interest groups; (2) dialoguing on the critical issues that impact the life of the community; (3) prioritizing crucial areas of concern; (4) and insisting that the politicians be held accountable to these concerns. Logic dictates that politicians often find it expedient to ignore low voter turnout communities. Addressing the history of the African Americans in America since the 1600s, the late Samuel DeWitt Proctor, a profound scholar, professor, theologian and author, once stated that,

All of the interventions by churches, schools, families, individuals, economic equality, and government are needed, and none is independent of the other. Yet one solution need not wait for the other. We all must begin where we can . . . But whatever has led us to this predicament can be undone; the spiral can be turned in a new direction.

. . . The question facing us now is, 'Where do we go from here?' The current crisis demands that we make choices that are worth living and dying for, choices deserving of our best efforts, choices that have the best chance of steering us toward the optimum human condition: a genuine community. To my mind, isolating ourselves from the rest of American society, or relying only on our African heritage for a sense of identity and pride, are not choices that will ultimately bring us into a genuine community with fairness and justice for all.⁹

⁹ Samuel DeWitt Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), 224 – 225.

One of the choices that can navigate the finest in all human beings is exercising one's inalienable right to vote. This will undoubtedly transform lives and ignite hope in the people to actively participate in the American value of democracy. Also, the mechanism of the vote will play a vital role in shaping the voiceless citizenry in the public square into investors in the American value of a democracy for humankind.

Biblical Foundation

The biblical text that shall be the focal point of this study is Acts 1:8, which says: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."¹⁰ Acts records the origination and growth of the Christian movement, telling us how the first believers lived out Christianity. The external evidence available for the authorship of Acts, obtained from the writings of the church in the first few centuries, is undisputed that the author was Luke. When we look for internal evidence (found in Scripture itself), we notice that Acts is connected closely with the third Gospel, which indicates common authorship. Both are addressed to the same person—Theophilus (Luke 1:3, "I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus," as compared to Acts 1:1, "In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning."¹¹ Acts begins by summarizing the contents of a "first book," whose contents correspond with the

¹⁰ Acts 1:8. (Note that the NRSV shall be used throughout this chapter unless otherwise indicated).

¹¹ Luke 1:3 and Acts 1:1

Gospel of Luke. Longenecker states, “Stylistically and structurally the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are so closely related that they have to be assigned to the same author.”¹²

Scholars have cited the date of the writing of Acts from early to mid-60s of the first century to much later in the century. The most evident point used in support of an earlier date is the fact that the book ends so abruptly with events that should be dated around the early 60s.¹³

The First Urban Christians, authored by Wayne A. Meeks, is an analysis of the social context of the early followers of Jesus through the Apostle Paul’s life and writings during the apostolic and post-apostolic period, as Christianity was established in the ancient city setting of the Roman Empire. Meeks draws on archaeological proof as well as historical and secular sources of evidence. In defining the fellowship and its boundaries, Meeks refers to “the language of belonging.” He cites a multiplicity of scriptures where one finds words that are meant to make one feel a part of a special group, such as “saints,” “the elect,” those that are “called,” and so on.¹⁴ This might very well convey what was essential to them and perhaps even where there were areas of discord within the subculture. Meeks says, “Especially striking is the language that speaks of the members of the Pauline groups as if they were a family.”¹⁵ He points out how Paul speaks of them as children of God and also of the Apostle in first two chapters

¹² Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ajith Fernando, THE NIV APPLICATION COMMENTARY*, (Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 21.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁴ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 85.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

of I Thessalonians. Meeks then expands on this thesis by pointing to the emotional language as substantiated by references to the Thessalonians as “brothers beloved by God” and the “joy of the Holy Spirit” because of their conversion (I Thessalonians 1:4, 6, “For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you . . . And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit.”).¹⁶

Meeks recognizes that, in the minds of most people, the first Christians were poor rural people, but the reality is most likely different. While the gospel may have been first preached in such settings, the faith began in urban areas and broadened first from one city to another and then to the rural areas.¹⁷

The dominant culture of the day was Greco-Roman and it is within this setting that Christianity found its place and to which it made its appeal. Because early Christianity was a minority rather than a majority position, early Christianity can be considered as a social movement with every practice that set Christians apart from the rest of Greco-Roman society. However, Meeks notes that in its inception Christians continued to be slave holders, and while there are examples of Christian individuals freeing their slaves, the general practice among Christians remained for many centuries of accepting slavery as a social institution.¹⁸ While slave owners and slaves were members of the early Christian churches, they were miles apart in their social status. They shared in spiritual equality, but were conspicuously unequal in their social

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 9-50.

¹⁸ Ibid., 63-64, 161.

environment. Would there be a need for a Race Relations Commission in most ethnically diverse denominations if that master-slave mentality did not still exist today?

The fascination with this brilliant work of Meeks aids the reader to feel as if he/she were on a tour observing life in the urban centers of the Roman Empire. Meeks gives one insight to the social structure of the people within the cities, and how that social structure could and did change on occasion. Urban cities were small in size but the average population was extremely dense, perhaps “two hundred per acre—an equivalent found in modern Western cities only in industrial slums.”¹⁹ This explains the founding of local churches that intimate in nature and the understanding of the new creation in Christ, and his deliverance of these ideas to his churches.²⁰ This may very well explain how the Christian enterprise might have expanded rapidly within the urban environment. The potential for the promulgation of the gospel yet carries the same potential in the urban sections of the cities in America today.

Today, we are living in a country where there is much contention between the government and the people. During the period known as Pax Romana, 27 BCE-180 CE, a relative peace prevailed throughout the Roman Empire. The term Pax Romana means Roman peace.²¹ Pax Romana represents a period within the Roman Empire in which the organized military government of Rome had pacified the various regions they conquered throughout the Mediterranean, northern Africa, Asia, and parts of Europe. Though

¹⁹ Ibid., 28.

²⁰ Ibid., 28-50.

²¹ Klaus Wengst, *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 8.

maintained by violence and the threat of violence, the Pax Romana was an era of relative calm in which Rome endured no significant civil wars or severe invasions.

During this period of peace, there was a demonstration of constructive relationships between the Roman Empire and the indigenous population. There was a collaboration between the Roman Empire and the “elders of the Jews” by arresting Jesus and eventually executing him, even though the Roman procurator, Pilate, initially attempted to have the Sanhedrin resolve their own issues because Pilate saw no fault in Jesus. Nevertheless, Pilate succumbed to the wishes of the Jewish community and facilitated Jesus’ trial and execution. Klaus Wengst discusses how the Roman Centurion of Capernaum was well received by the Jewish community to the point that when his child became ill, the community elders implored Christ to heal his child. Also, during the Pax Romana, the Apostle Paul was protected by the Roman soldiers for the period of his near lynching by a Jewish mob. Wengst continues to infer that Luke emphasizes “the apolitical characterization of the Christian proclamation” coupled with “the natural loyalty of Christians to Rome.”²² He concludes that Luke on the one hand continually emphasizes that the church does not jeopardize the peace and security of the state, and on the other he describes the disbelieving part of Judaism as politically defiant.²³ The author of this project maintains that if the church is truly the church there will always be tension with the government. The government often fosters the self-interest of the powerful few. However, the church is called to be prophetic witnesses, particularly for the disenfranchised and the poor.

²² Ibid., 89-100.

²³ Ibid., 99.

Arguably, Acts 1:8 is the key text to the entire Book of Acts. It is the primary verse of the Book of Acts. It is the foundational text of the researcher's project. This text speaks of the power and the program of those who have been called out to be witnesses for Christ or the ecclesia. The power is the Holy Spirit. The program is the Christian prophetic witness to the world.

The notion of a person to declare to be filled with the Spirit and not recognize the call to be a prophetic witness in the public arena is a contradiction in terms. When the Holy Spirit fills the heart with divine power there is a simultaneous call (Acts 1:8) to be that witness for the voiceless; for the ignored; for the deprived; and for the poor. The contrary is also true. For instance the witness cannot be satisfied without the "power" of the Spirit.²⁴

In other words, a disciple of Christ is compelled by the power, presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit to be a prophetic witness of the gospel in the world. So the true church of Christ is never content to be witnesses within its own walls. Frustration, fear and lethargy may become the dominant characteristics of the church simply because it has lost the power of the Holy Spirit and the willingness to be prophetic witnesses in a world going haywire.

This writer believes that the ugly practices of prejudice, racism, inequality, economic disparity and oppression threaten to become a way of life in the world. This is the case because often the witness of the church is silent, powerless and without direction. The church must never be satisfied until the world is impacted by the gospel and transformed into the likeness of Christ.

²⁴ Beacon Bible Commentary (Boston: Beacon Hill Press, 1969), 262.

Acts 1:8 unearths the three main branches of the Book of Acts: (1) Witnessing in Jerusalem (chapters 1-7); (2) Witnessing in all Judea and Samaria (chapters 8-12); and (3) Witnessing in the Gentile World (chapters 13-28). The apostles were to be Christ's witnesses in Jerusalem. Then they were to spread out from Jerusalem into all Judaea, east to the Jordan River, and south to Hebron, and west to the Mediterranean.²⁵

Located North of Jerusalem was Samaria, which was populated by people who were partially Jewish and partially Gentile. This ancient city of Samaria, capital of the northern Kingdom of Israel, had been seized by the Assyrians in 722 or 721 B.C. The superior people of the land were taken as captives and established in countries east of Mesopotamia. Concurrently, people from these eastern territories were relocated to Israel. This strategy was embraced by the Assyrians to erode all nationalistic spirit and so prevent insurrections against their supreme power. Consequently, the Samaritans were an offspring of only one purebred parent and were held in disdain by the Jews of Judea and Galilee. Nevertheless, Jesus commanded His Jewish disciples to evangelize them.²⁶ Hence the norm of the world is rarely the standard of Christ.

Similarly, the researcher's project is inclusive and favors no particular segment of people. Although the church participants were of a predominantly black church, their involvement in Faith Vote Columbus allowed them to interface with a great variety of people of different religious backgrounds, races, cultures and genders. Contrary to the discriminatory practices of the past, exercising the vote is the right of all adults regardless to their walk in life.

²⁵ Beacon Bible Commentary, (Beacon Hill Press, 1969), 262 – 263.

²⁶ Ibid., 263-264.

Albert C. Winn makes a noteworthy examination concerning the change of direction that is emphasized in Acts 1:8. He asserts that “No longer will Israel wait for the nations to come to her, bringing gifts to Jerusalem (see Isaiah 2:3; 45:14; 60:4-7); instead, the witnesses of Jesus will go out from Jerusalem to the nations.”²⁷ He goes on to say: “Can a church which sits on its corner and is content to minister merely to those who come to it claim to be faithful to this command?”²⁸ The answer to this profound question is a resounding no. Prophetic witnesses more than ever in the history of the world are compelled to go out beyond the walls of the church to be that voice for the voiceless, that activist for those without hope and that advocate for the destitute.

Jesus’ proclamation of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to be prophetic witnesses in the world is a vital text in this book. It highlights the two main themes of Acts: the Holy Spirit and witness. Jesus’ disciples will become witnesses only after the Holy Spirit comes on them and they shall be empowered to begin with Jerusalem, then move to Judea and Samaria and culminate with witness to the ends of the earth.²⁹ The prophetic witnesses of the church must be careful not to step in front of God, but to move in accordance with the power and direction of the Spirit of God. Our voice can only be heard by those nearest to us, but the voice of God through us can be heard around the world. The Spirit of God is the prime mover while we become the witness of God on earth.

²⁷ Albert C. Winn, “The Acts of the Apostles,” *The Layman’s Bible Commentary* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1960), 22.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ajith Fernando, *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 30.

From Acts 1:8 to the end of the Book of Acts, the grand action that rules this book is evangelism. Fernando notes that “The two major methods used in evangelism in Acts were the winning of attention through miracles and apologetics (the defense or proof of Christianity). All the messages recorded in Acts had a strong apologetic content. The evangelists sought to show that Christianity withstood the questions that the people were asking, and the records of the speeches indicate that their evangelism was strongly content-oriented.”³⁰

Chapter one of the Book of Acts records the promise of the Holy Spirit (1:4-5, 8, “While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. ‘This’ he said, ‘is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ . . . But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”).³¹

Acts proposes an energetic community that was passionate about mission, compassionate toward one another, and more than willing to handle matters that affected its unity. In the account of community, Luke’s characteristic concern was for the indigent.³²

Some of those who have concentrated on the theology of Acts, such as Ernst Haenchen and Hans Conzelmann, reject the historical value of Acts. They have pointed

³⁰ Fernando, *NIV APPLICATION COMMENTARY*, 30.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

³² *Ibid.*

to the contradictions among the Gospels and between Paul's letters and Acts, as well as the assumed historical errors, in stating their case for discarding the credibility of Acts.³³

However the Scottish scholar, Sir William Ramsay, labored hard to sway scholarly thinking in the way of an optimistic outlook of the historical reliability of Acts. Ramsay was a lecturer in classical art and archaeology at Oxford University when he toured Asia Minor for archaeological work.³⁴ There he found out that Acts was unequivocally accurate. For instance, the common observation among scholars at the time, based on material by Cicero and Pliny the Elder from about a century before the New Testament era, was that Iconium was a city in Lycaonia.³⁵

Ramsay thought that the author of Acts had used Xenophon to obtain the idea that Iconium was in Phrygia. Ramsay assumed that Luke, not knowing about the region, took this information and transposed it to the first century, by which time the borders had altered so that it was no longer true. However, after much exploration Ramsay discovered that Acts was precisely true. The first century Iconium was definitely a city in Phrygia, as opposed to Lycaonia.³⁶ Ramsay notes also that the author of Acts mentioned that the people of Lystra spoke "in the Lycaonian language" (14:11, "When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have come down to us in human form!'", which would have meant a change from the language spoken in Iconium.³⁷ Historic writings demonstrated that Phrygian was spoken in Iconium until the

³³ Ibid., 23.

³⁴ Ibid., 24.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 25.

³⁷ Ibid.

end of the second century.³⁸ Ramsay realized that this historical comment had been incorporated into Acts because the contrast had registered with Paul, who had undoubtedly mentioned it to Luke. Ramsay continues to note the description of the gods of the people of Lystra as Zeus and Hermes (14:12, “Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.”), and through his research realized that “Zeus and Hermes were commonly regarded in that region as associated gods.”³⁹

Micah 6:8 is the fundamental Old Testament text essential to the researcher’s project model. The prophet Micah tells us what God wants. He does so in a verse regarded as one of the unforgettable and ageless eloquent statements of Old Testament ethical religion. Micah 6:8 says, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”⁴⁰ This was revealed to Israel in the social concerns reflected in the Mosaic legislation. God told the people what is good. The Mosaic law pointed out the difference between good and bad and reflected God’s will in many areas of their religious and social lives.

This well-known passage showed what God required of the people. They were to act justly or to do justice. The word “justly” has here the sense of “true religion,” such as an ethical response to God that has an emergence in social concerns as well. We are “to love mercy” which is to freely show kindness to others. The expression “to walk humbly

³⁸ Ibid. 25.

³⁹ Ibid., 24 – 25.

⁴⁰ Micah 6:8 KJV

with your God” means to live in an alert and aware fellowship with God, exemplifying a spirit of humility. The principle of this verse for those who are members of the covenantal community is to explain the areas of ethical response that God desires to see in those who share the covenantal commitment.⁴¹

The writer contends that to be just, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God is not only a personal charge, but also a public and moral obligation. He asserts that working toward the resolution of human need and justice is the modern call upon the faithful. Hence, voting is a modern way that people of faith can organize toward this end.

Meeting the Micah text is in essence an act of worship. The writer contends that doing justice is worship. The practice of mercy or kindness is worship. Worship is to always remember that it is not about the motives or self-interest of the individual, but rather about a humble walk with God. Hence, God ultimately is the prime mover of justice and mercy bestowed upon the beloved community.

This rich Micah passage (Micah 6:8) reminds the writer that worship is sharing our substance with the hungry. Worship is to treat others fairly and with dignity and respect. Worship is to provide housing, job training and employment for the poor and disadvantaged. Worship is sharing the clothes in our closet with those who have no clothes. Worship is not giving up on those who are incarcerated. They too are God’s children. Worship is organizing to increase voter turnout in order to transform communities and empower people. A lack of sensitivity to the Micah text might serve to enable the church to languish without a purpose and direction, but yet act as if there is no connection to a liberating Lord and Savior who seeks to transform the world.

⁴¹ *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, 436 – 437.

The prophet Micah's mandate to do justly, love mercy and to stride humbly with God can give credence to the voter mobilization movement. A great opportunity for Micah's mandate to flourish in this contemporary society would be to participate in a non-partisan GOTV campaign. This empowers people to transform their gloomy despair into an oasis of hope, freedom, and dignity in life.

Christians are called to help government live up to its divine mandate to render freedom, peace and justice. When the church abides by these values through exercising the privilege of the right to vote, it will speak volumes about God and will contribute to the common good and help eradicate the ills of society.

The follower of Christ seeks to be a good citizen of God's kingdom on earth. It, therefore, should be of little surprise when the world bears witness to a Christian plunging into social and political problems. As a result, slavery is condemned. Suffrage is advocated.

The Christian joins other courageous supporters to make straight the pathway for African Americans, women and other oppressed groups to gain the right to vote. The Christian is compelled to love God, self and neighbor. There has been a legacy of partnering with other social activist organizations and advocates. Together, they have plunged into the largest mass movement for suffrage in the eighteen and nineteen hundreds. Alexander Keyssar says, "Class, race, gender, ethnicity, and religion all have played a part in the history of the right to vote in the United States."⁴² Again, it is for the most part crucial that Christians turn out and participate by voting, given the biblical imperative to good citizenship, which in essence is to "love the Lord your God with all

⁴² Keyssar, *The Right To Vote*, xxii, 172 – 221.

your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength . . . (and to) love your neighbor as yourself.”⁴³

The welfare of a people partly requires the necessity to be counted in a census. According to an article in the *Ebony Magazine* of April 1, 2000 entitled “Why The Census IS IMPORTANT TO YOU—African Americans civil rights,” it was held that “Census data, such as race, sex, age and educational level, directly affect African-Americans in virtually all decisions made in education, employment, veteran’s services, public health care, transportation and housing. In addition to using the census data to develop, evaluate and implement programs, and to determine how to divvy-up more than \$185 billion in funds each year, the federal government also uses census results to monitor and enforce compliance with civil rights statutes, including the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and employment, housing, lending, education and anti-discrimination laws.”⁴⁴ Numbers matter and can, in turn, impact critical change when those who are counted in the census exercise the right to vote.

More than numbers, organizing the community matters. Robert C. Linthicum states in his book *City of God, City of Satan* that after the prophet Nehemiah networked and researched the community, he gathered together the influential inhabitants of Jerusalem. Then Nehemiah addressed them saying “You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace. I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, ‘Let

⁴³ Mark 12: 30-31

⁴⁴ *Ebony Magazine*, (Johnson Publishing Company, 2000).

us start rebuilding.’ So they began this good work (Nehemiah 2:17-18).”⁴⁵ This reminds us of the importance of networking with community stakeholders and members within the context in question. Nehemiah’s research of the community reminds us to gather pertinent facts regarding the demographics and social characteristics of the area to which God has called us for ministry.

Then Nehemiah, says Linthicum, identifies the issue of grave importance to the people, “the broken-down walls of Jerusalem.”⁴⁶ While this was not the most significant issue, Nehemiah wisely chooses to organize the community around the issue of vital importance to the Israelite people living in the community.⁴⁷

This is a marvelous strategy in that it starts with the interest and concern of the people, not the leader(s). This alone can spark a sense of ownership and investment of the people toward the resolution of a given issue of importance to them. And, as Linthicum asserts, they are willing to be personally responsible for their own state of affairs. Then Nehemiah guaranteed that they did not stand alone in the chore of rebuilding the walls. The emperor of the entire Persian Empire was standing behind the project to offer funds and materials needed. Additionally, God had so blessed this enterprise that it was apparent that the Lord was supportive of the effort as well. In other words, Linthicum contends that the main principles for undertaking efficient and godly community ministry are as follows: (1) The people who are best able to handle an issue are the people most affected by that issue; and (2) People that are barred from full participation in the social,

⁴⁵ Robert C. Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), Nehemiah 2:17-18, NIV.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 202.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

economic, or political life of their city or community can be empowered to participate only when they act communally.⁴⁸

The Book of Nehemiah, chapter 7, verse 5 says, “And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein ...” Nehemiah regards himself to have been divinely inspired by God to start an assembly of the people for a census.⁴⁹ Numbers matter because God created all of humanity to have purpose and therefore people matter, people count. Paul asserts that, “In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will,” (Ephesians 1:11).

While a census is not the same thing as voter turnout it does remind us that people don’t count politically if they do not vote. Getting people to vote means getting them counted. And God’s presence can bring about a constructive transformation in the lives of the people through the mechanism of their valued vote.

We cannot fade into a do nothing existence; retreat behind the pomp and circumstance of religious dogma and ritualism; or pew sit while the world becomes chaotic. Turning out the vote preserves the world from decay and illuminates the Spirit of God in us to direct the world toward transformation from despair to hope. God is counting on us to be the prophetic witnesses of justice and mercy while walking humbly with God.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 202-203.

⁴⁹ NRSV Harper Study Bible, vol. 3, 727.

Historical Foundation

This project is partnered with Faith Vote Columbus, which is the latest project of the national Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). The Asbury North United Methodist Church officers elected to engage in this partnership because it suited our passion to increase voter turnout by a non-partisan approach. This organization would also help us to build partnerships with others who desired to employ community organizing, civic participation, and communal transformation through increased voter turnout in the urban areas of the City of Columbus, Ohio.

The IAF was founded in 1940 by Saul Alinsky, considered by many to be the founder of modern community organizing. The IAF was originally conceived as a training institute for professional organizers around the country. The current generation of IAF organizations—broad based coalitions of religious congregations, neighborhood associations, civic groups, and labor unions—began in the middle 70s and was the product of the insight and effort of the person who succeeded Saul Alinsky as executive director of the IAF, Edward T. Chambers. Since then, the IAF has built 56 organizations in 21 states, the District of Columbia, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

Each IAF affiliate is an independent organization, run by religious and civic leaders from diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds, focused on building power together for the purpose of transforming their communities and creating new realities. One new reality created by the IAF is the living wage movement in the United States. The first living wage bill was conceived, designed, and implemented by the IAF affiliate in Baltimore in 1994. The second bill was the work of the IAF affiliates in New

York City in 1996. Since then, IAF affiliates in Texas, Arizona, and elsewhere have passed living wage legislation.

A second new reality created by the IAF is the presence of thousands of new, affordable, owner-occupied homes—called Nehemiah housing—in parts of Brooklyn, the South Bronx, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. A third social reality created by the IAF is the Alliance School concept that is engaging scores of thousands of parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders in communities all across the southwest and west. The fourth new reality, still in development, is the large-scale blight removal and revitalization of the cities, well advanced in parts of New York City, now being attempted in Baltimore and Philadelphia. A fifth new reality is health care reform in Massachusetts, the result of work by the IAF affiliate in Boston to push for universal health insurance coverage.

In the process of experimenting with ways to transform citizen leadership into real political power, the IAF has become a national expert in non-partisan voter mobilization. The IAF strategy for increasing voter turnout in low-performing precincts was developed in two laboratories: Baltimore affiliate was able to increase voter turnout in targeted precincts enough to swing the outcome of the 1998 Maryland Gubernatorial election. This electoral clout helped the organization deliver millions of dollars in infrastructure improvements—parks, housing, and educational programs—to the Baltimore neighborhoods that participated in the get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts. Similarly, the IAF affiliate in East Brooklyn under the leadership of Reverend Johnny Ray Youngblood and top GOTV consultant David Fleischer, increased voter turnout in targeted precincts through the disciplined training and deployment of church volunteers.

In 2004, Jonathan Lange organized a group of IAF volunteers to initiate a new experiment in East Cleveland, Ohio. East Cleveland, noted to be the poorest suburb of the poorest city in the nation, once had one of Ohio's lowest voter participation rates. In the 2000 election, only 5000 of the municipality's 15,000 registered voters showed up to the polls on Election Day. From a standing start just 10 days before the election, IAF volunteers were able to double voter turnout in 2004 up to 10,000 votes—four times the increase of anywhere else in Cuyahoga County.

This dramatic increase in voter turnout attracted the attention of many national funders—including the Open Society Institute, the Veech Foundation, the Rockefeller Family Fund, and the Association of Federal, State, County, and Municipal Employees—who asked the IAF to build permanent voter mobilization organizations throughout Ohio to determine the viability of such a mission. In 2006, the IAF chose to focus on four cities where it thought it could have the most impact: East Cleveland, Lorain, Dayton, and Columbus.

In July 2006, IAF organizer Ari Lipman temporarily re-located from Boston to Columbus in order to jump-start the new IAF organization: Faith Vote Columbus. Working from a limited number of previously established contacts, including Asbury North UMC, Mr. Lipman began meeting with a diverse set of church, synagogue, union, and civic leaders interested in non-partisan voter mobilization work. The discussion centered around an innovative strategy that focused on: (1) Targeting low-performing precincts in urban areas; (2) Building citizen leadership and investing in training; (3) Giving people a reason to vote by developing an urban agenda and bringing it to the

center of debate in the races for state-wide office; and (4) Demanding recognition and accountability from the next Governor, Senator, and Secretary of State of Ohio.

Approximately 25 churches, synagogues, neighborhood associations, and labor unions joined the non-partisan Faith Vote Columbus coalition. Throughout the voter mobilization and GOTV process, the Asbury North UMC involved a consistent delegation of 75 to 100 interested persons of approximately 216 parishioners. By the end of August 2006, over 500 members of these congregations, community-based organizations and unions had participated in small group meetings in which they identified the issues they wanted the next Governor to address and adopt for the campaign platform. A team of seventy leaders met twice in September 2006 to discuss and negotiate a concrete five-point issue agenda that could be presented to the candidates in quest of a state-wide office. The group chose to focus on the following five key issues: (1) Health Care; (2) Jobs; (3) Education; (4) Pension/Retirement; and (5) Voting Rights.

Faith Vote Columbus organized a rally of 425 members on October 22, 2006 and extended invitations to the candidates for Governor, Senator, and Secretary of State from both parties to attend the event and make specific commitments on the Faith Vote Columbus Issue Agenda. All candidates were given the same opportunity to meet with Faith Vote leaders in advance for a complete briefing on the content and format of the upcoming occasion. In the end, only the Democratic candidates chose to attend this non-partisan event. Gubernatorial candidate Ted Strickland, Senate candidate Sherrod Brown and Secretary of State Candidate Jennifer Brunner each committed to the Faith Vote Columbus issue agenda, and agreed to meet with us within the year if elected in order to report on their progress in fulfilling their commitments. At this event, Faith Vote

Columbus signed up 220 volunteers to participate in targeted GOTV activities leading up to Election Day. This involved phone banks, neighborhood walks, and Election Day voter mobilization work. David Fleischer came to lend his expertise and train volunteers for the precinct work. Ultimately 300 volunteers participated in this activity, which was enough to send trained workers to 15 key precincts with poor records of voter turnout in previous elections. Asbury North U. M. Church enthusiastically shared approximately twenty-four volunteers.

The overwhelming participation of the Asbury North United Methodist Church has enriched beyond measure community relationships; church, synagogue and civic organization partnerships; and opportunities to effect positive change. The IAF organized similar campaigns in Dayton, Lorain, and East Cleveland, all supervised by Jonathan Lange. The IAF is still waiting on final precinct-by-precinct data from the Franklin County Board of Elections to evaluate the voter turnout in our targeted precincts.⁵⁰

Voting eradicates apathy, encourages participation, sustains freedom and serves as a check and balance to a governmental system that is supposed to be a partner with people from all walks of life. However, voting was not always a right and privilege for certain groups in America.

When the riots occurred against the Stamp Act passed by the English Parliament to impose a direct tax on the American colonies in 1765, General Thomas Gage intimated that leaders of the Independence movement who thereby wanted to use the mob energy against England became worried by the thought that it might be directed against their

⁵⁰ Specific information regarding the Industrial Areas Foundation is credited to an interview with Ari Lipman who has been an organizer with the IAF for six years working for affiliates in Massachusetts and Ohio, Tuesday, November 28, 2006, 8:52 a.m.

wealth also. During this period, the top 10 percent of Boston's taxpayers held about 66 percent of Boston's taxable wealth, while the lowest 30 percent of the taxpaying population had no taxable material goods at all. Those without such property (blacks, women, Indians, etc.) could not even vote nor participate in town meetings.⁵¹ It is ironic that just five years later (March 5, 1770) Crispus Attucks, who was of African and Indian blood, became the first martyr when standing with a mob of American leaders defying the British Red Coats?⁵² This was an oppressed, freedom hungry, voiceless man who could not even vote, but yet died for rights he never enjoyed. There are so many voiceless, homeless, jobless persons who do not have health care or a decent wage with benefits who are the living dead in the graveyards of hopelessness. They can vote, but their oppressive state of affairs cries "What's the use?" Thank God for history that tells us to never give up and that God will make a way somehow.

The historic litany of suffrage clearly supports this notion. Suffrage in representative government means the right to vote in electing public officials and accepting or turning down proposed legislation.⁵³ America is replete with changes to the voting laws. Some of these changes with regard to the evolution of the vote of American citizens are as follows: 1820s–1830s new states began joining the union. Other states restricted the right to vote to white men who owned property or who paid taxes. Only a few free northern or southern blacks could vote.

⁵¹ Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States 1492–Present* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999), 65.

⁵² *Encyclopedia of Black America* (New York: McGraw – Hill Book Company, 1981), 144.

⁵³ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 9, 646.

However, women could not vote anywhere, even if they owned property. In 1840, women, such as Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, argued that men and women were created as equals and they supported many reforms that would advance the status of women in society, particularly the right to vote; 1865-The Civil War concluded and blacks began demanding political rights, including the right to vote with Radical Republicans supporting their efforts; 1869-Blacks won the right to vote; 1866-Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony founded the American Equal Rights Association that was inclusive to all genders and ethnic groups; Congress adopts the 14th and 15th Amendment granting the right to vote regardless of one's race, color, or previous servitude; 1920-Congress adopts the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, thereby granting women the right to vote and The National American Woman Suffrage Association became the League of Women Voters soon after; 1964-The 24th Amendment was ratified, prohibiting states from using poll taxes to prevent minorities from voting; 1965-President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act. This federal law reiterated the rights granted under the 15th Amendment and protected them from such state-supported obstacles as literacy tests and complicated ballot boxes, that often deterred them from voting; 1971-The 26th Amendment was ratified, lowering the minimum voting age from 21 to 18.⁵⁴ The historic value of voter turnout is obvious. Votes count, people count and civic participation from all the people in the land is the biggest sustaining factor for a representative and equitable democracy.

⁵⁴ Ed Gate, *Copernicus Election Watch: History of the Vote*, http://www.edgate.com/elections/inactive/history_of_the_vote/.

To turn out the vote through community organizing and the encouragement of civic participation is in essence a way to flood the polls with values. They are values of the rich, poor, and middle class collectively expressing their values in public life itself. Multitudes of people turning out to exercise their right to vote could very well connect with God moving through living souls to unveil God's nature and will on earth.

This author maintains that the 1965 Voting Rights Act embodied a different climate than the recent election among African Americans. Then the climate was a fight for dignity and inclusion in America's democracy. Now the climate is frustration with politicians who are replete with promises and inept in the ability to deliver on such promises. Then the climate was a sense of unity among the African Americans to gain their inalienable right to vote that guaranteed a recognition of hope for the future. Now the climate is so rattled with poor education; drug addiction; incarceration; and poor media images that the power of the vote threatens to become inconsequential to too many African Americans.

Theological Foundation

Allan Dwight Callahan in his book, *A Love Supreme*, defines theology in a way almost everyone would understand. He says that "Talk about God is called theology, a term derived from the compound of two Greek words, 'theos', God, and 'logos', discourse. Theology is our discourse about God, 'God talk,' so to speak."⁵⁵ Callahan boldly suggests that scholars have wrongly placed the sequence and importance of the

⁵⁵ Allen Dwight Callahan, *A Love Supreme* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 21.

works collectively known as the Johannine tradition, both the Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles. He argues that the Johannine tradition should be reevaluated in terms of a different developmental plan, one that sees its “spiritual” message as deeply rooted in the social and political realities of the Roman Empire. The key theme of this tradition, says Callahan, is love, not love as whimsical affect, but rather the act of “putting one’s life at the disposal of [others].”⁵⁶ Callahan defines this as agape love which is the greatest of all love.⁵⁷ Callahan asserts that “The love of Jesus is not made manifest in the world without provoking the hatred of those who do not know that love and falling prey to the betrayal of those who do.”⁵⁸

Perhaps the love of God is as strange to the church as it is oblivious to the world. Perhaps the prophetic witnesses within the church are silenced by a church culture that loves lofty words, but is unwilling to live them out for fear of painful retribution and persecution from the world. The writer acclaims that the practical strategy of encouraging people to exercise their right to vote is in essence an extension of the love of God for the people of God. It is the church partnering with God to elevate the welfare of humankind. Organizing the community to participate in the constructive outcome of adverse, unfavorable and severe issues through voting is arguably a modern day act of love.

The chapters of Callahan’s book move systematically through the Johannine writings, offering a fairly thorough discussion of the epistles and essentially, a more discerning treatment of the Gospel. While at times it is difficult to classify and arrange

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 79.

Callahan's commentary, there is no doubt that the positive contribution of the book lies precisely in its identification and description of the very theme of the book, love.

Callahan correctly discerns that *koinonia* is economic. In other words, love must be expressed in the sharing of resources. True compassion according to Callahan is "pity with a pocketbook."⁵⁹ Consequently, the world's goods become a sacrament in the Beloved Community.⁶⁰ The resources are not to be used to make the few rich, but rather to support the health, welfare and potential of the many. The love of God is to benefit all God's people. God's abundant resources for humanity are not to be squandered and depleted by the often selfish, greedy and corrupt minority. This theology is so wholesome that the people and structures of power often loathe and rebel at such a practice. However, this is truly when the church is being the church. To translate the theology of God's love into the practical application of the vote can literally transform communities and foster equitable conduct of the rich toward the poor. .

I John 3:18 says, "Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action." Callahan notes that words are "insufficient media for love."⁶¹ This suggests that God can not only empower prophetic witnesses with eloquence of words but, more importantly, with the dignity of action. This notion of action discharges deeply in the experience of African Americans and their ancestry. Given the covert, harsh discriminatory practices of recent history, the Black Church could ill afford to espouse a pie in the sky religion. She had to raise the consciousness of parishioners, define the

⁵⁹ Ibid., 38.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 39.

⁶¹ Callahan, *A Love Supreme*, 16.

polarizing issues of society, organize the community to strive for those inalienable rights often taken for granted by their counterparts, and hold accountable those politicians and power structures to address their plight. When African Americans fought for and gained the right to vote, the positive transformation of their communities fostered hope and guaranteed inclusion in many smoke-filled rooms where critical decisions were being made. The Faith Vote Columbus initiative secured the interests of people who share the common need for more constructive and productive communities.

Soul Theology by Nicholas Cooper-Lewter and Henry H. Mitchell is a superb book that examines black theological and ethical perspectives in African-American culture and their importance for all humanity. This is rare because it monitors the belief systems of African-Americans as they actually put them into practice. One of their poignant points is that “If a tenet of faith has no behavioral implications, it is not worth the trouble it takes to write it down.”⁶² This implies that human welfare is the driving precedent above doctrinal and theological differences. In other words, if the needs and wellbeing of people are not paramount, then Scripture and doctrine and theology are virtually not worth the ink written on the paper. For instance, the authors note that the love of God for the children of God is far more important than the violation of a law that prohibits working on the Sabbath. After the disciples were spotted picking and eating ears of corn on the Sabbath, Jesus retorted to their religious critics, “The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27-28 NRSV). Cooper-Lewter and Mitchell conclude that God

⁶² Nicholas Cooper-Lewter and Henry H. Mitchell, *Soul Theology: The Heart of American Black Culture* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 162.

recognizes no glory from human malnutrition born of blind obedience to a law.⁶³ They suggest that “Interpretations of Scripture can be evaluated for their effects on human wholeness and spiritual health.”⁶⁴ In other words, our church doctrines and principles must be as practical as human need and as uplifting as bringing equality to the oppressed. The authors define equality as “not merely political rhetoric; it involves God’s justice expressed impartially.”⁶⁵

The United Methodist Church supports the notion that human need must be highly valued. A portion of the Social Creed of the Church states: “We commit ourselves to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities; to the improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of all persons.”⁶⁶ The church must be grounded in the lives of the people she is called to serve. Community organizing and increased citizen participation in voting is a contemporary prophetic witness in the church and community context.

God’s justice is made known through the prophetic witnesses who faithfully and courageously allow themselves to be God’s instruments. We are God’s stewards on earth. Sallie McFague in her book *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* clearly charges humankind to be a voluntary participant in taking care of this planet earth. She suggests that we must abide by three rules as members of the

⁶³ Ibid., 162.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 161.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 95.

⁶⁶ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2004), paragraph 166.

planetary household: (1) take only our own share; (2) clean up after ourselves; and (3) keep the place in decent repair for future generations.⁶⁷

McFague urges us to become environmental activists. She states that “The Christian churches (and all other religions as well) should be part of the conversation for the public good—not as cogs in the wheels of the establishment but as counter-cultural voices for an alternative kind of abundant life for all members of the global family.”⁶⁸ In explaining where the presence of God may be, McFague so beautifully concludes “In nature’s health and beauty, I see God; in nature’s deterioration and destruction, I see that God is here also. In the first case as a Yes and in the second as No: in the first case as a positive affirmation of God’s glory through the flourishing of creation; in the second, as a negative protest against whatever is undermining God’s creation.”⁶⁹ If the presence of God can be seen in the magnificent beauty of the planet earth, then this same God will grant us the power to be prophetic witnesses as we speak out against its destruction.

In his book, *God’s Politics*, Jim Wallis notes that “our souls and our society are in great need of transformation.”⁷⁰ Wallis’ case is based on the politics of the Bible as it would pertain to “what authentic faith or belief creates in terms of actions and lifestyle.”⁷¹ He poses some critical theological questions for the reader.

⁶⁷ Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 122.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁷⁰ Jim Wallis, *God’s Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn’t Get It* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005), 36.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

“How does a nation of endangered souls recover an authentic faith that is true to the gospel, the example of Jesus, the witness of the prophets, and the crushing needs of our times? What would such a recovery mean for evangelicals, mainline Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, seekers, and everyday people? What if everyday people made the politics of the prophets their litmus test for political candidates, and for fiscal, social, corporate, and foreign policy issues?”⁷²

While the Church and State should be separate, Wallis contends that spiritual values nevertheless undergird everything and are mirrored in the society we live in, the social and political pathways we choose, and the candidates we elect. He asserts that “When religion is relegated merely to the private sphere, it becomes vulnerable to the charge of being ‘soft’ and therefore irrelevant to public life.”⁷³

Wallis continues,

“Instead of trying to strike an elusive ‘balance’ between private piety and the social gospel, we must go to the heart of prophetic religion itself in which a personal God demands public justice as an act of worship. We meet the personal God in the public arena and are invited to take that relationship to that God right into the struggle for justice. Indeed, without that personal relationship we will lose the political struggle. That shift – bringing the personal God into the public arena – is at the heart of the prophet’s message and will transform both our religion and our politics.”⁷⁴

Wallis advocates that centering on values in the public square would be a fresh alternative to the derisive politics of fear and “political spin.”⁷⁵ It takes numbers to accomplish such a revolutionary change on the political scene. It would take collaboration between the church and the community to effect this healthy

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 37.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 40.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 84.

transformation. That is why the researcher's project presents such a vibrant resolution for ignored and desolate communities. The vote gets politicians attention and empowers people.

People who are living under oppression can easily be discouraged by the notion of adopting the middle class value of voting. Faith has been the cornerstone that motivated people to aspire beyond their immediate oppressive circumstances. However, today there are multiplicities of obstacles that can cause people to drift away from God and thereby lose the incentive to transform their circumstances. In discussing his life experiences, Proctor asserted, "Young people did not choose the chronic poverty, the total social rejection; begrudging educational opportunities offered them, and denial of a fair chance at employment. They are stranded—in the streets, in jail, and stretched out in mortuaries and morgues."⁷⁶ The writer/researcher maintains that the prevailing negligence to vote could very well contribute to the social ills Proctor cites. When the majority fails to vote, the power hungry minority often retreats into the cocoon of self-interest.

Limited community organizing and minimal participation entices politicians to ignore the plight of the people. As a result, some politicians feel that they have the license to ignore to the needs of their constituency. The plight of overlooked communities unfortunately causes them to become even more inferior. This Faith Vote Columbus project guarded against the threat of this downward spiral. Community levels of organizing, partnering and collaborating were high. Volunteers were numerous. Voter participation increased. Politicians welcomed periodic follow-ups of accountability

⁷⁶ Samuel DeWitt Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For* (New York: Judson Press, 1995), 164.

verifications. The Asbury North UMC participants were highly enthusiastic throughout the entire voter turnout process.

Howard Thurman discussed factors such as fear, deception, and hate as being internal obstacles that adversely discourage the oppressed. These psychological conditions serve to prevent the oppressed from being an integral part of society. Howard Thurman addressed this dilemma when he suggested that the oppressed

must recognize fear, deception, hatred, each for what it is. Once having done this, they must learn how to destroy these or to render themselves immune to their domination. In so great an undertaking it will become increasingly clear that the contradictions of life are not ultimate. The disinherited will know for themselves that there is a Spirit at work in life and in the hearts of men, which is committed to overcoming the world. It is universal, knowing no age, no race, no culture, and no condition of men. For the privileged and underprivileged alike, if the individual puts at the disposal of the Spirit the needful dedication and discipline, he can live effectively in the chaos of the present the high destiny of a son of God.⁷⁷

The writer believes that the discipline to cope in the midst of chaos must be simultaneously met with the challenge to change the conditions of the community in which one resides. The strategy of turning out the vote to effect transformation can alter one's negative perception, identity and fears. The Asbury North UMC participants seemed to truly value this notion mainly because of their personal experience of observing the struggle of their parents attempting to cope in a world of the denial of basic rights, such as the right to vote.

Marcus J. Borg in his brilliant book entitled *Jesus* makes a passionate point that the church truly matters. He raises two critical functions of the church. First, he notes that

⁷⁷ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Richmond, IN: Abingdon Press, 1949), 108-109.

churches are to be branded as communities of transformation. Borg defines this to mean that churches are in fact communities of “resocialization.” He explains this to mean that

To be Christian is to be resocialized into a different understanding of reality and way of life—to live in relationship to another Lord and vision, to be shaped by the Bible and Jesus. Being Christian doesn’t mean being anti-American, but it does mean that Christian identity and loyalty matter more than national identity and loyalty. When there is a conflict, Jesus is Lord. The church is the community that proclaims, incubates, and nourishes the lordship of Christ.⁷⁸

Prophetic witnesses in the public are driven, motivated and empowered by the Spirit of God. The potential intimidation of the government or politicians bears virtually no weight as compared to the desire to serve Christ and to make the kingdom of God known on earth. The Asbury North UMC participants clearly recognized the empowering presence of the Spirit of God throughout the research project.

Second, Borg continues to suggest that there is yet another central function of the church. He underscores that it exists for the welfare of the world. He states that “It (the church) does not exist for its own sake. It is grounded in God who ‘so loved the world,’ not God who so loved the church and Christians in particular. The church is to be a mediator, an instrument, of God’s passion for the world’s well-being.”⁷⁹ The world belongs to God and therefore must be attended to in accordance to the desires of God. To ignore this responsibility welcomes destruction to our environment, greed and corruption among the world economies, and enmity among the people of the world. God calls the prophetic witness of the church to address and eradicate these evils of the world. Voter participation is a tactic that can protect humankind from the misguided evil of the few.

⁷⁸ Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary* (San Francisco: Harper Publishers, 2006), 308 – 309.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 309.

Matthew 6:10 states that the coming of God's Kingdom is synonymous with God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven. Niebuhr espouses this belief by suggesting that Jesus is God-with-us.⁸⁰ The writer suggests that Jesus was not sent to earth to provide for an escape out of this world. Christ was sent to love, reconcile, sacrifice, restore, and transform this world through the prophetic witness of the faithful. The Faith Vote Columbus initiative of community organizing and volunteer voter turnout participation bears this out.

This writer maintains that it is our moral obligation to challenge the self-interest of a few. Loving others is encouraging them to exercise their right to vote. This empowers the people to turn politicians into servants and to transform communities. This is one way of many to make God's kingdom known on earth.

The writer/researcher argues that if the church and community collaborate to embrace that social responsibility to improve the health care system, provide for a living wage with benefits, ensure quality education, and attend to the needs of the disenfranchised the world, they will begin to realize the living presence of God's Kingdom on earth. Loving our neighbor coupled with social action can transform the world.

James H. Cone, a celebrated author and developer of Black Theology, wrote:

There is no liberation without transformation, that is, without the struggle for freedom in this world. There is no liberation without the commitment of revolutionary action against injustice, slavery, and oppression. Liberation then is not merely a thought in my head; it is the sociohistorical movement of a people from oppression to freedom—Israelites from Egypt, black people from American slavery. It is the mind and body in motion,

⁸⁰ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harpers Collins Publishers, Inc, 2001), 190-229.

responding to the passion and the rhythm of divine revelation, and affirming that no chain shall hold my humanity down.⁸¹

A nonviolent, non-partisan approach to increase voter turnout is one way to accomplish this revolution for the freedom of the oppressed to which Cone refers.

This research project affirms that community organizing and citizen participation is as vital as a deeply held theological supposition. In fact, theology withstands the annals of time when it can be practically applied to the welfare of the human race. Hence, the discourse of the kingdom of God can best be realized by the active engagement of the Church to turn out the vote and transform communities. Without the active participation of the common citizen in government, this official ruling body may very well serve the interests of the few.

⁸¹ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 139-140.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis

The intent of this project was to monitor approximately thirty-three Asbury North United Methodist Church parishioners and their attitudes and values toward community organizing and voting. The hypothesis of this project model rested upon the notion that a non-partisan voter mobilization effort can positively transform church membership involvement in the community context. The get-out-the-vote (GOTV) initiative afforded the church members the opportunity to become prophetic witnesses in the public arena.

The premise of this project model contained three presuppositions: (1) that the local church participants would recognize a moral obligation to vote; (2) that the participants would be motivated by the church's initiative to embrace a community voter mobilization; and (3) that the community organizing strategies presented by the Industrial Areas Foundation would influence the involvement of the participants in the voter mobilization effort.

To accomplish the intent of this project, the Asbury North United Methodist Church participants partnered with an historic and distinguished community organizing engine, namely, the Industrial Area Foundation, better known as IAF. This partnership provided a hand in: (1) becoming a church without walls by meeting people in the church and community context to encourage them to vote; (2) encouraging people to participate in the process of holding elected officials accountable; (3) discussing and prioritizing

critical issues (Protection of Pensions, Formation of Jobs, Equity in dispersal of funds throughout the Public Education System, Universal Health Care Coverage for the citizens). This project monitored the Asbury North UMC participants and their level of participation in the Faith Vote Columbus voter turnout initiative. The elected officials were encouraged to adopt these issues as their platforms and were held accountable to act upon these concerns; and (4) bringing about a celebrated awareness of the power to change through the practical execution of church and community organizing, civic participation, partnerships, and the ability to shape and transform lives.

Intervention

This project emanated from the eager determination of the church leadership and members to bond with the community as was the case in history. Due to the fact that 90% of the congregation no longer resided in the project context area, reconnecting with the community became a major concern.

During the early summer of 2006, the Industrial Areas Foundation, a community organizing team, implored churches/synagogues/temples, labor organizations and neighborhood associations to come together to get out the vote within the communities in Ohio. This would in essence get the attention of politicians. The sheer numbers of volunteers empowered people with the ability to hold elected officials accountable. This coalition later was named Faith Vote Columbus.

The Asbury North UMC church revitalized its prophetic witness in the public square through the means of a non-partisan voter turnout initiative organized by the

author, leaders of the congregation and the Industrial Areas Foundation staff. The very concept of voting and voter turnout as a means of transforming the deprived conditions within the project's church and community context seemed to highly impact the congregation's resolve to reach out.

Research Design

The researcher used a qualitative research approach for the evaluation of the project. The researcher sought to establish the meaning of the participant's attitude and value toward voting. Of the three data collection tools (questionnaire, interviews and memoir), the interviews were carried out in the researcher's office at Asbury North United Methodist Church, Columbus, Ohio and were tape-recorded with the consent of the interviewees. Each session lasted a half hour. The recordings were transcribed for the purpose of analysis.

Measurement

In order to measure the impact of Asbury North UMC's collaboration with the IAF, the project incorporated a qualitative research approach. The tools used were a combination of interviews, questionnaires/surveys, and a memoir. This research approach best assisted the researcher in obtaining insight into the parishioners' values, beliefs, and attitudes through participation in a community voter mobilization drive.

This research was of an exploratory and open-ended nature. Hence, the measurement represented a process that involved the design and implementation of a questionnaire, interviews and memoir. There also was a broad range measurement approaches using tables and analysis of responses concerning specific subject matter. This research project observed the congregation's attitude and values concerning voting and analyzed what strategies were best used in order to get a congregation involved in the community.

Instrumentation

The research instruments used to collect information were questionnaires, interviews and a case study. For the purposes of this research project, the Context Associates were consulted.

The total participants asked to complete the questionnaire were thirty-three lay members of Asbury North United Methodist Church. The total interviewed were eight lay members of the said charge. One case study was asked of a lay member who participated in the entire non-partisan voter mobilization project. The questionnaire given to the thirty-three participants was accompanied by a letter (See Appendix E). The questionnaire for the participants covered personal demographic and historical details, the level of participation in the Faith Vote Columbus voter mobilization drive, the participant's attitude toward voting, and whether they recognized God's presence in this voter turnout initiative. The questions were mixed in order so as not to reveal any

categories or patterns to the participant.¹ (See Appendix F for the questions used in the questionnaire and interview with the results, as well as the written memoir of a participant who went through the entire Faith Vote Columbus process from the inception to the end of this project study).

The purpose of the interviews was to gain a more in-depth understanding of the participant's values concerning voting and whether it was affected by a sense of moral obligation coupled with the community involvement experience through the voter mobilization drive.

The memoir was used to strengthen the analysis of the participant's responses to the questionnaire and interview questions. The memoir indicated a detailed real-life contextual analysis of the overall experience of the voter mobilization drive. The memoir also reflected the experience of community organizing. It provided the researcher with opportunities to triangulate data in order to reinforce the research findings and conclusions.

¹ Ibid., 159-164.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Project Development

The actual preparation for and execution of the voter mobilization drive took place over a nineteen month period beginning May 2006 and ending December 2006. Before the pastor/author and congregation were introduced to the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), a series of sermons were coincidentally preached on social justice and the role of the church. The pastor of this project preached on such concepts as being our neighbor's keeper, understanding that our neighbor is all of humanity, considering a church without walls, embracing the least of these, and being empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses that transform communities.

Dialogue ensued among the church leadership and congregation around the need for outreach in the surrounding community context. Two IAF staff members, Ari Lipman and Jonathan Lang, visited with the pastor in May 2006. Their approach was unique in that they seemed genuinely interested in the pastor's ministry and his community outreach priority. They recognized that their community organizing and voter turnout experience could be a great asset to the Asbury North UMC family. They shared their backgrounds and staff affiliation with the Industrial Areas Foundation.

Subsequent meetings were held with local church officers as well as the Church Council (the official administrative body of the church). The officers could readily see a natural outreach connection to the community by partnering with the IAF staff. They were also intrigued by the strategy of identifying critical issues experienced in the church

and community context. The idea of building partnerships throughout the Greater Columbus area fostered increased interest in that officers were able to recognize that the greater the number of participants could generate a greater sense of accountability from the elected officials.

The pastor and Church leaders kept the congregation informed of IAF Faith Vote scheduled events. This was done both verbally and in writing. Each time an event was scheduled the pastor would talk of the importance of attending the event from the pulpit and a leader would encourage congregants to attend the event. Additionally, the Church bulletin was used to remind the congregation of the next IAF Faith Vote Columbus event.

Each step of the organization for Faith Vote Columbus was designed so that each meeting was predicated upon the previous meeting. During the first meeting, the Asbury North congregation identified community concerns that the next Governor of the State of Ohio should address. The second meeting required Asbury North to take their concerns to a larger meeting of community activists. The various groups were to come to consensus on the issues to be addressed by the next Governor. The next meeting resulted in a ratification of the questions to be asked of the political candidates and an expansion of the original program to invite the US Senate candidates and the Secretary of State candidates to a meeting in October 2006. The issues and resulting questions were identified and crafted by the Faith Vote volunteers. The simple action of getting Asbury North parishioners and other volunteers to craft the language for candidate questions spawned a sense of ownership to the process before the entire Faith Vote Agenda was revealed. The unfolding of the IAF collaboration is explained in detail in the Historical Foundation section of Chapter Three.

Data was collected throughout this process, including but not limited to the results of the August 13 survey of the Asbury North Membership,¹ minutes of various meetings,² questionnaires of the congregational membership³ and one-on-one interviews⁴ with the membership.

Additional research assistance was secured. Seven professionals representing various fields of expertise were invited to serve as Context Associates to assist in designing a project study for analysis.⁵ Five out of seven of the Context Associates held public-service-oriented jobs. The other two associates through their work with Asbury North headed ministries of a servant-leader capacity. Three of the associates were members of Asbury North United Methodist Church.

Eventually, after several months of discussion and meetings,⁶ the Context Associates gravitated toward the idea of an initiative to encourage the community to demonstrate their strength by exercising their right to vote.⁷ Information provided by the Industrial Areas Foundation revealed that the context area of Asbury North displayed poor voter turnout during the electoral process.⁸ This idea was raised with the Context Associates and the ministerial thesis project was developed. Also, three Professional

¹ Appendix A.

² Appendix C.

³ Appendix E.

⁴ Appendix G.

⁵ Appendix C.

⁶ Appendix C.

⁷ Appendix C.

⁸ Appendix B.

Associates were secured to render advice and information throughout the writing of this project.

Asbury North United Methodist Church Congregation Participation

The congregation of Asbury North United Methodist Church engaged in an initiative designed to increase the church's participation in community activities and directed at changing the quality of life of the community surrounding the church, known as the context area. Prior to the initiative, participation within the Outreach Ministry of the church was beginning to dwindle with only a handful of members keeping programs viable. Participation of the church in community activities was in a declination mode and it was getting more difficult to get members to participate in any of the community outreach programs.

With the encouragement of the Pastor and a Church senior the initiation of the congregation's mobilization for a voter mobilization drive began in August of 2006. The congregation was asked a simple question regarding the Ohio Gubernatorial election of 2006; "What can the next Governor of the State of Ohio do for our community?"⁹

Several Sundays prior to the first IAF congregational event, the pastor and a Church leader requested the congregation to attend. Flyers were placed in the Sunday bulletin reminding people of the first event. On August 13, 2006, Bishop C. Joseph Sprague, a retired United Methodist Bishop who was serving on the IAF staff in Dayton, Ohio preached the morning service of worship. Immediately following the worship experience, the congregation was asked to go to the lower level Heritage Hall to engage

⁹ Appendix D.

in a discussion involving community concerns. Out of 216 members, approximately 75-80 elected to participate in this discourse.

The initial congregational survey regarding community concerns was performed in conjunction with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). This non-partisan democratic action organization works with communities and leaders of religious congregations, labor unions and civic organizations throughout the nation to develop effective citizen mobilization strategies.

The congregation divided into 9 tables and each table discussed and submitted areas of community concerns they would like to see the next Governor of Ohio address. The large degree of participation was unexpected and the ideas for improvement for the community were surprisingly similar with a common thread running from table to table, even though there had been no communication between the tables during the survey.¹⁰

A series of training seminars and group meetings were scheduled to work on a city-wide initiative to democratically select community concerns that groups similar to Asbury North could agree upon.¹¹ The groups that collaborated with the Asbury congregation are listed.¹²

October 22, 2006, 6:00 p.m., approximately two weeks prior to the November 7, 2006 election congregations, neighborhood associations and labor groups met at Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church, Columbus, Ohio. The Faith Vote Columbus organization agreed to invite candidates of each of the political parties to answer questions pertaining to vital concerns identified by the group. The concerns were

¹⁰ Appendix A.

¹¹ Appendix D.

¹² Appendix D.

pensions, jobs, education, and health care. Beyond the invitation to the candidates for Governor, the organization decided to extend invitations to those running for the Senate and the Secretary of State.

Approximately 500 attended the rally. Sixty were Asbury members. Each candidate adopted for their platforms the Faith Vote Columbus concerns. They were asked a final question to come back to Faith Vote Columbus in 2007 and address their progress on concerns raised by the Faith Vote Columbus organization, to which they consented. At the end of the rally, the audience was asked to sign up to be Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) volunteers. Approximately three hundred people made the commitment, including thirty-seven volunteers from Asbury North United Methodist Church.

October 23, 2006 through November 6, 2006, the volunteers participated in training sessions of how to do GOTV campaigns. The volunteers teamed up by twos and did door-to-door canvassing throughout those communities showing low voter turnout in the previous election, and encouraged registered voters to exercise their vote in the upcoming election. Other volunteers participated in phone bank campaigns reminding people to vote and soliciting their assistance to volunteer to GOTV with Faith Vote Columbus. Records were kept for follow-up purposes. On election day, volunteers were at the voting precincts to assist voters with any obstacles they may have encountered that may have prohibited their vote. Many were asked to become volunteers with Faith Vote Columbus in future GOTV campaigns.

Collection of Data and Asbury North Congregation

Participants Response to Questionnaire

Thirty-three Asbury North UMC members were active in the Faith Vote initiative from its conception were contacted to determine if they were willing to fill out a questionnaire about their experiences.¹³ The questionnaire was divided into four categories: Demographics of the Congregation; Participation in the Faith Vote Columbus Initiative; Attitudes Towards Voting; and Recognizing God in the Process. The categories were mixed throughout the questionnaire and thirty-three members were solicited to respond.

The suppositions analyzed within the questionnaire and further explored in the interview of eight of the thirty-three participants were: Did the church members recognize a moral obligation to vote? Were the parishioners motivated by the church initiative to engage in a community voter mobilization drive? What was it about the community organizing effort that influenced their involvement in the voter mobilization project?¹⁴

Analysis of Data and Outcome

The participants have generally been long-term members of the Asbury North Congregation with membership spanning seventy-six to one and a half years with an

¹³ Appendix E.

¹⁴ Ibid.

approximate average of twenty years.¹⁵ The majority of the members have been registered voters in excess of twenty-five years.¹⁶ Almost seventy-five percent of the participants were 50 years or older.¹⁷ This finding shows that over seventy-five percent were born prior to the enactment of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Almost one third of the participants hailed from Southern States. All of the participants attended High School with over eighty percent stating they attended college.¹⁸

Over ninety percent of the participants live outside of the context area.¹⁹ Less than a third of the members had ever participated in a non-partisan civic initiative²⁰ and about the same percentage participated within a partisan political campaign.²¹

There were seven events scheduled for the Asbury North UMC volunteers.²² Participation within the voter mobilization initiative varied but was persistent throughout the three month organizing drive (August 13-November 7, 2006). With the exception of the New Life UMC event, thirty-three participants of the Asbury North UMC were at the seven scheduled events. Most of the participants identified all three areas of concern (the condition of their community, the politicians currently in office, and political

¹⁵ Appendix A.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

representation within their community) as reasons why they participated in the electoral process.²³

In regards to the participants' attitudes towards voting, over half of the participants believed that a non-partisan campaign focusing on issues worked better than a partisan campaign focusing on candidates. 96% of the applicants stated that they believe voting can change the social conditions of a community.²⁴ Ninety percent of the participants believed voting turnout was important.²⁵

Over fifty percent of the participants believed the voting process is effective.²⁶ Forty-two percent of the participants stated that the voter mobilization drive changed their attitude towards voting.²⁷

One hundred percent of the participants believed that they have a moral duty to vote.²⁸ A moral duty to vote was also expressed in the interview and the memoir where it was felt voting was not only a secular responsibility, but also a moral duty.²⁹ Ninety-three percent of the participants believed that church authorities support voting.³⁰ Ninety-three percent of the participants believed that the church should encourage people to vote. This was also stated within the interview and the memoir.³¹ Eighty-five percent of the

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Appendix G, Appendix.

³⁰ Appendix A

³¹ Appendix A, Appendix G, Appendix F.

participants believed that they have a civic duty under God to vote.³² While eighty-one percent of the participants believed we are encouraged to vote through the Scriptures.³³ Approximately three-fourths of the participants believed that it matters to God whether they vote and went on to say that they sensed the presence of God during the voting mobilization drive.³⁴ Fifty-four percent of those that were questioned saw God in the voting process while sixty-three percent achieved personal benefit because of their participation in the voter mobilization drive.³⁵ Finally, sixty percent of the participants believed sermons impacted their interest in voting. This was expressed in both the questionnaire and the memoir.³⁶

All of the participants interviewed felt strongly that they had a moral obligation to vote. Voting was a matter of ethics, principles and beliefs. All of the interviewees stated that their involvement in the voter mobilization drive was directly related to the Church initiating the experience.

Based upon questionnaire responses to involvements in partisan and non-partisan voting activities, less than a third of those questioned had ever participated in partisan/non-partisan activities. Therefore, the Church's initiatives had a very strong impact on their participation. Seventy-five percent of the congregation lived through the disparate treatment of African Americans prior to the Civil Rights Movement and the

³² Appendix A, Appendix G.

³³ Appendix A.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Appendix A, Appendix F.

Voting Rights Act of 1964. This perhaps explains the development of a participation pool that realized the price paid in attaining the right to vote.

This project evaluated the congregation through the use of a questionnaire, interviews and a memoir. First, the researcher sought to find out if they recognized a moral obligation to vote. It was found that 100% of the participants felt that it was their moral duty to vote. Responses from the interviews supported this finding. One interviewee stated that she saw “God in the whole voting process for an African American . . . God enabled fore parents; fore fathers; fore mothers to help make that change in America . . . God is part of my going into that booth, and I thank God for the whole process. I think God is part of the process where we can go out and encourage other people even with so many doubts these days.”³⁷ Another participant responded: “God calls you to work on justice issues and to elect public officials who will serve the majority of the people and not a chosen few. This is our responsibility as Christians . . . I know that God loves us and accepts us as we are. Whether we vote or not God’s love is going to be constant, but I still think that in our response to God’s love we have a responsibility to vote.” The memoir writer reinforces this belief and stated that: “I couldn’t see what God had to do with voting—but it isn’t so much about voting as much as it is about taking care of our fellow humans. It is similar to us being stewards of the earth . . . (We) have a moral responsibility to take care of all of God’s creatures as well as His planet.”³⁸

³⁷ See Appendix A, Appendix G.

³⁸ See Appendix G, Appendix F.

Second, the researcher sought to discover if the participants were motivated by the church initiative to engage in a community voter mobilization drive. Sixteen of thirty-three respondents were not motivated by the Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) drive, while fourteen of the thirty-three respondents were motivated by the experience. Others did not respond to the inquiry.³⁹ This result indicated that perhaps many of the participants already considered voting as a significant value based on past and present experiences. The interviews bear this out when one said “Very much so . . . If the church had not been involved I would not have been involved . . . The leadership involved I felt comfortable following the leadership that they had checked everything out to see that it was okay.” Another interviewee stated no, “Not changed because I have always been interested. I’ve always thought people that sit home and don’t vote, then don’t vote, then don’t complain about whatever happens . . .” Another stated “No this is a continuation of efforts throughout my life.” The memoir writer stated “I think one of the reasons that they stayed was because of the push from the pulpit and the request from church seniors of the importance of the exercise. Pastor constantly addressed in numerous sermons the ills of society.” These beliefs are reinforced in Question #28 where attitudes towards voting have remained unchanged because of the mobilization drive.⁴⁰

Finally, the project sought to discover how the community organizing effort (the GOTV campaign and strategy) influenced the participant’s involvement in the voter mobilization process. The researcher observed that the participants were highly motivated by the experience of actual contact with the electorate. When groups came back from

³⁹ Appendix A.

⁴⁰ Appendix G, Appendix F, Appendix A.

phone bank and door-to-door campaigns, they seemed pleasantly surprised that most voters were very responsive. Groups of volunteers suggested that the non-partisan approach was the main reason why people took time to listen. They weren't pushing political figures, but rather the importance of voting lest the community is ignored by politicians. Politicians, it was learned in a Faith Vote Columbus workshop, normally will ignore the needs of those communities with a low voter turnout.

The questionnaire indicated that 22 respondents felt that they truly benefited from the community organizing experience; 5 indicated that they did not benefit; and 6 did not respond to this enquiry.⁴¹ One interviewee stated "The fact that it was such a wide spectrum of individuals participating: The church, unions, and not only the church you had the mosque, the temples that were involved and it was not only ecumenical but then you drew in the unions and the other groups that share in the same concerns." Another interviewee stated "It was a very good strategic step-by-step thought through plan of how to bring individuals together to bring what happened in the 2006 and I like the organization of it."⁴² Another interviewee stated. "I was impressed at the individuals who were passionate, who were professional, who were competent, who were skilled and talented and in my opinion who . . . could have been involved in careers which paid them better which gave them maybe more prestige which would give them other assets but those individuals chose to spend (their careers) in something (like) the IAF community effort . . . " The memoir writer felt that the actions of the IAF developed into a "true fellowship of mankind."⁴³ This requires sound and efficient organizational skills.

⁴¹ Appendix A.

⁴² Appendix G.

⁴³ Appendix G, Appendix F.

In conclusion, there appeared to be a number of concerns that motivated each of the interviewees to become involved in the voter mobilization drive. Out of the eight interviewees, four were inspired by the organization and dedication of the Industrial Areas Foundation staff. One member interviewed believed the IAF staff to be so competent that their skills could have been used to secure high paying jobs in comparison to their IAF salaries. One interviewee stated that, "(IAF) leadership that was expressed throughout . . . was impressive." Another interviewee stated that "I liked the fact that it was well organized. I liked the fact that the people involved were experienced." One interviewee was not really impressed, but that was because she was trained by Saul Alinsky, founder of the Industrial Areas Foundation.⁴⁴

A couple of the interviewees specifically stated that they were driven to be involved with the IAF by their need to effect change within the context area of the church. All eight of the interviewees strongly believed it was the Church's responsibility to carry the banner to achieve justice and equity throughout the context area.

⁴⁴ Appendix G.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

Although the membership of Asbury North United Methodist Church clearly recognized a theological importance in voting approximately two-thirds had not ever participated in a get out the vote campaign (partisan or non-partisan) prior to Faith Vote Columbus.¹ Given the opportunity to participate in voter turnout work through their church, they volunteered their time and energy. The writer contends that three underlying conclusions can be made: (1) First, Churches like Asbury North UMC can tap into new energy in their congregations by getting involved in get out the vote (GOTV) work; (2) Second, there is an untapped pool of energy and talent that other non-faith based partisan and non-partisan GOTV campaigns have missed in the past; and (3) Third, the Spirit of God can invigorate people to become involved with the community through voter participation, community organization and anticipated possibilities of transformation.

A voter mobilization drive such as the one conducted by a relatively small congregation such as Asbury North UMC would not have been possible had the Church advocated for a politician as opposed to an issue.

There are certain variables involving the Asbury North UMC participants reflected in the questionnaire, interviews and memoir that should be highlighted. The majority of the participants had experienced voter discrimination and had first hand knowledge of the nation's history prior to the Civil Rights Movement. The maturity of the participants also rendered an appreciation for the difficulty involved in achieving the

¹ Appendix A.

right to vote. They were aware that lives were lost because there was a question of citizenship rights based on skin color.

The researcher found that voting is as sacred to the participants as perhaps receiving the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism. The most amazing finding was that the thirty-three participants surveyed and the eight interviewed felt that they had a moral obligation to vote. A majority felt that it was their civic duty under God and that the Church should be involved politically when there is disparate treatment in a society. If we have learned anything from our recent history then it is the fact that silence towards wrongs can be equated with acquiescence. This brings to mind the holocausts of both the institution of slavery in this nation as well as the genocide of Jews in Europe during World War II. How many lives might have been saved had the Church stepped up to the plate and had spoken the truth instead of standing by in silence?

The participants were extremely motivated by the community voter mobilization drive as well as community organizing. Their sentiments are best observed in the memoir reflections, found in Appendix F.

There are factions in every church who would rather just go along to get along. However, this study shows the participants expect the Church to take the lead and be a prophetic witness in a perplexed world.

Inasmuch as the graphs may have seemed excessive, the researcher viewed them to be vitally significant to the unfolding input of the participants. This project was a focused study about a congregation's sense of moral obligation to vote; their motivations behind the community voter mobilization drive; and the influence of community organizing as an effective tactic used to change political behavior and transform

communities. This project satisfied the church's desire to reach out and connect with the community. Other than voting, perhaps the reader could explore other common interests that would generate the church's interest to become involved in the community.

The reader may want to investigate what the underpinning factors are that can serve to motivate a congregation to reach out to the community. In other words, perhaps the non-partisan voter mobilization effort allowed the church and community to connect around issues as opposed to political figures. What are other mutual factors that can generate stronger church and community relations?

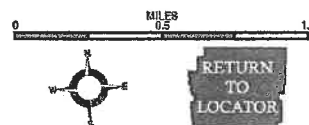
The writer believes that this project model can be replicated in other churches and communities. This project observed the interests around critical issues of concern to the parishioners. It embraced partnerships with other church/synagogue/temple and community stakeholders. It comprised of effective training sessions covering community organizing and voter turnout strategies. It brought politicians to the table of understanding and accountability.

The writer's prayer is that *A Congregation's Motivation Behind Voting as It Relates to Their Moral Obligation and Community Involvement* will trigger an interest in the reader to sustain church and community relations through the incentive to exercise the inalienable right to vote. The alternative threatens a return to that all familiar state of chaos where the shackles of lethargy, isolation, and deprivation effectively bury the creative and vibrant state of communities throughout the world. We cannot afford to allow the dark cloud of the self-interest of the few to hover over us. Our vote can make a difference. Our vote can transform communities. Our vote does matter.

APPENDIX A
ILLUSTRATIONS

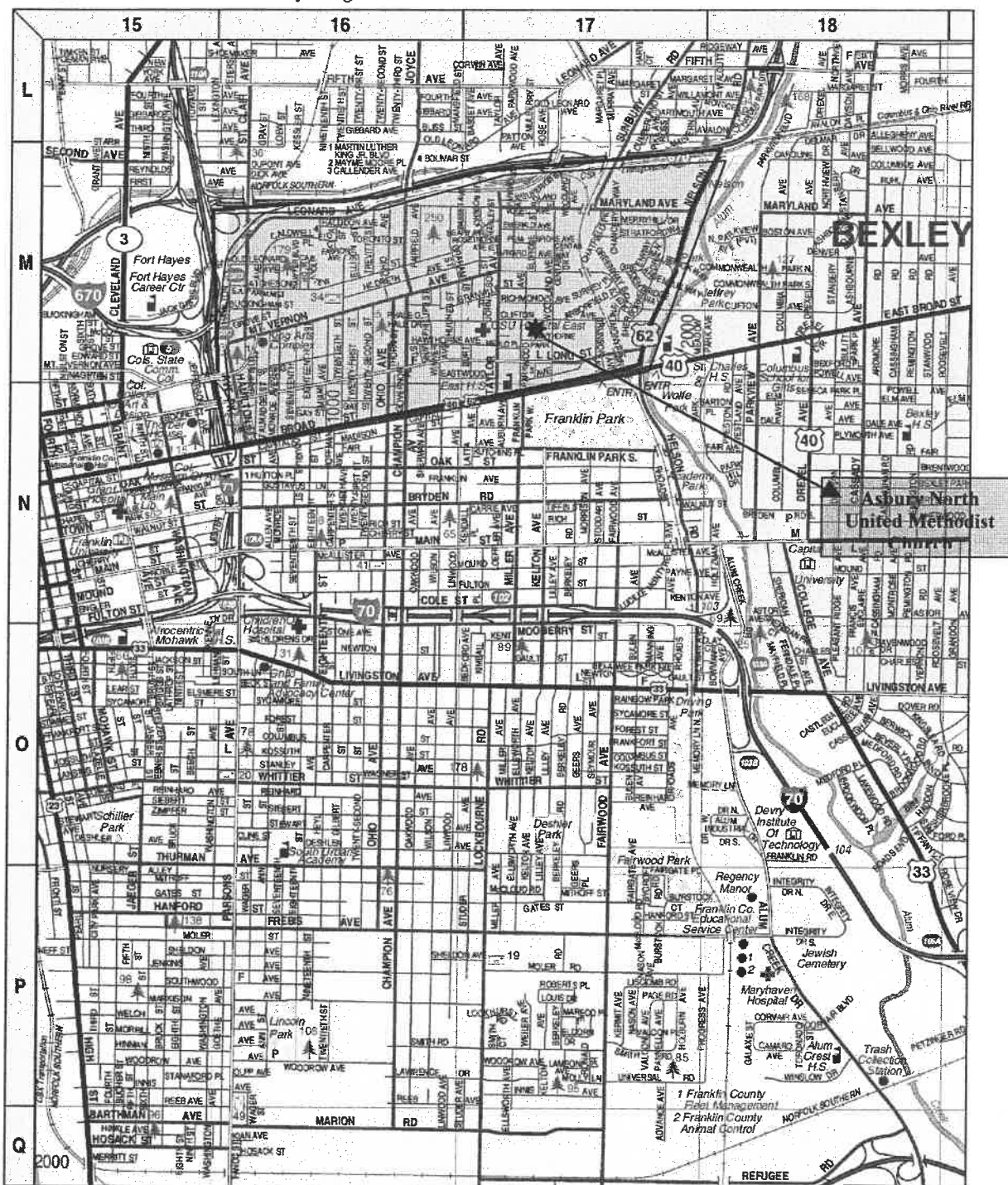


Franklin County Atlas Page
Dean C. Ringle, P.E., P.S.
Franklin County Engineer



MAP 28

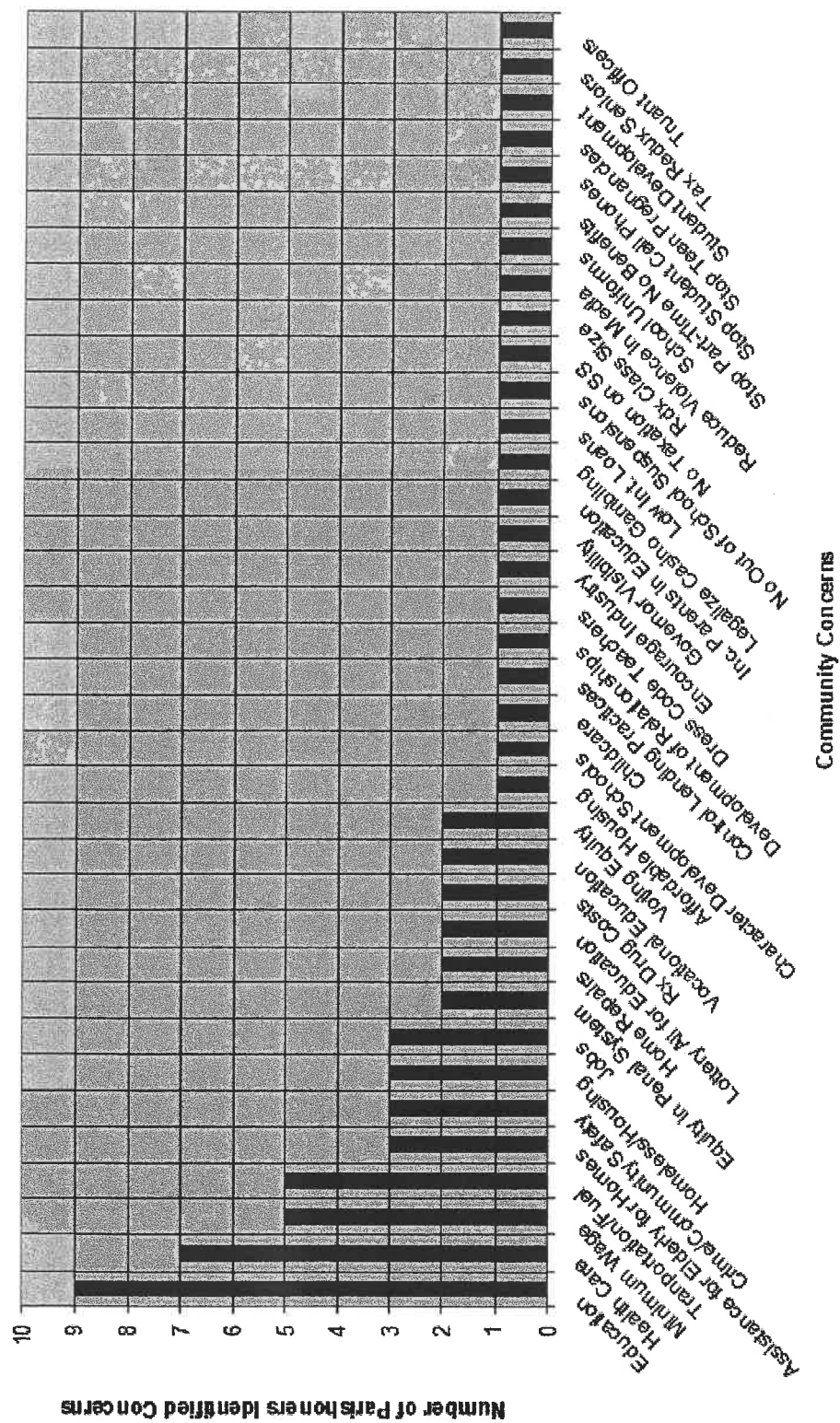
19	20	21
27	28	29
35	36	37



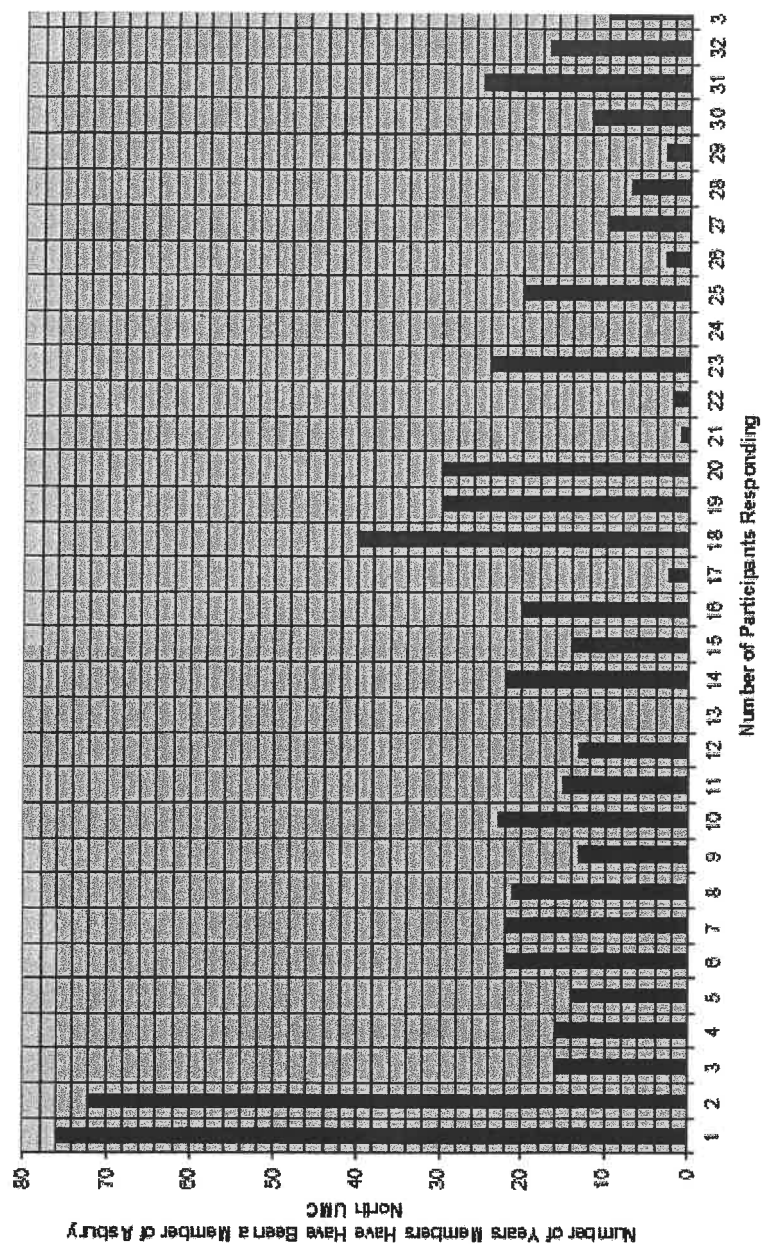
Published by the Franklin County Engineer's Office, 2006.

www.fceo.co.franklin.oh.us

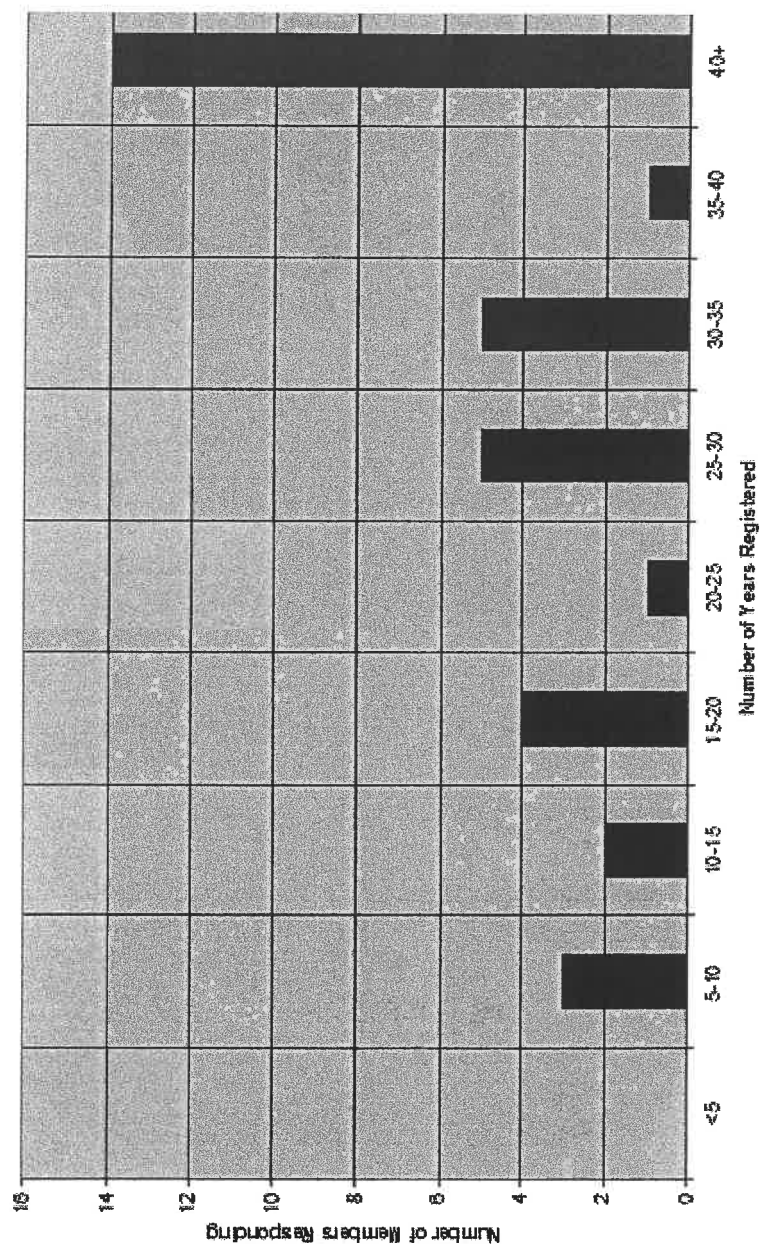
Graph A



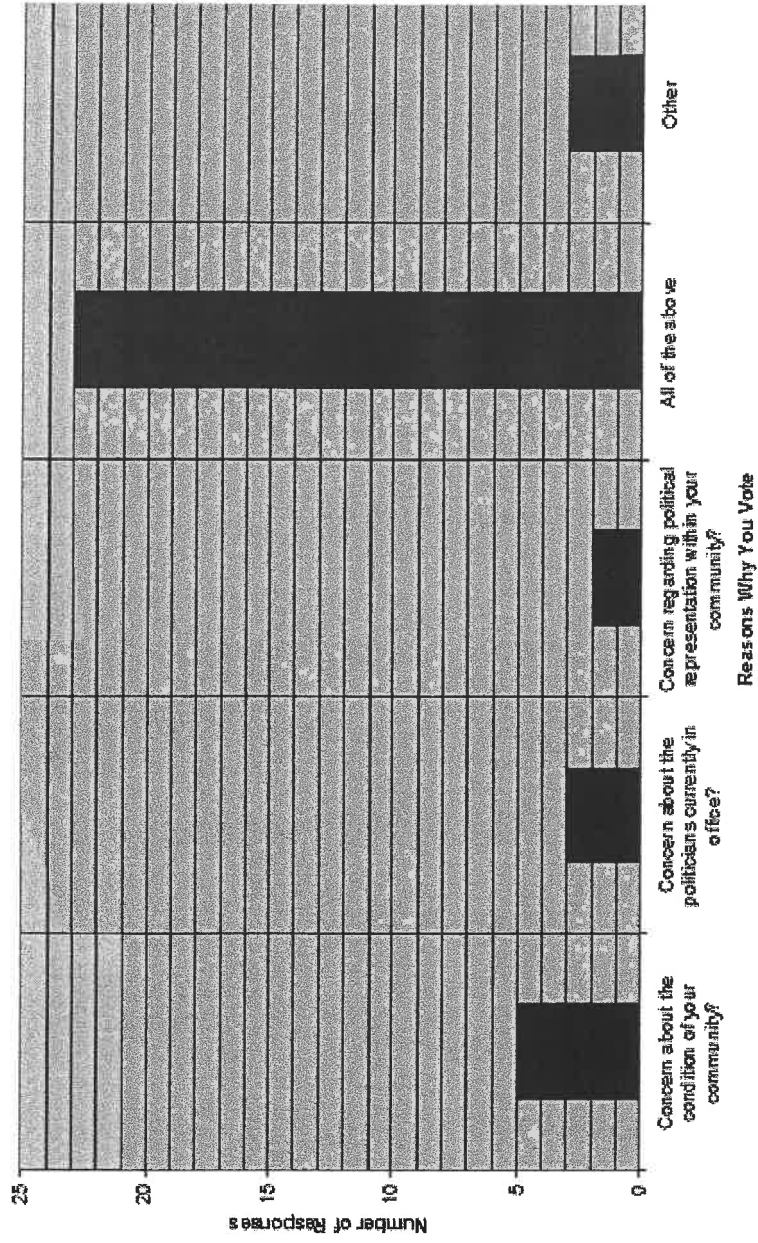
Question #1 How Long Have You Been A Member of Asbury North



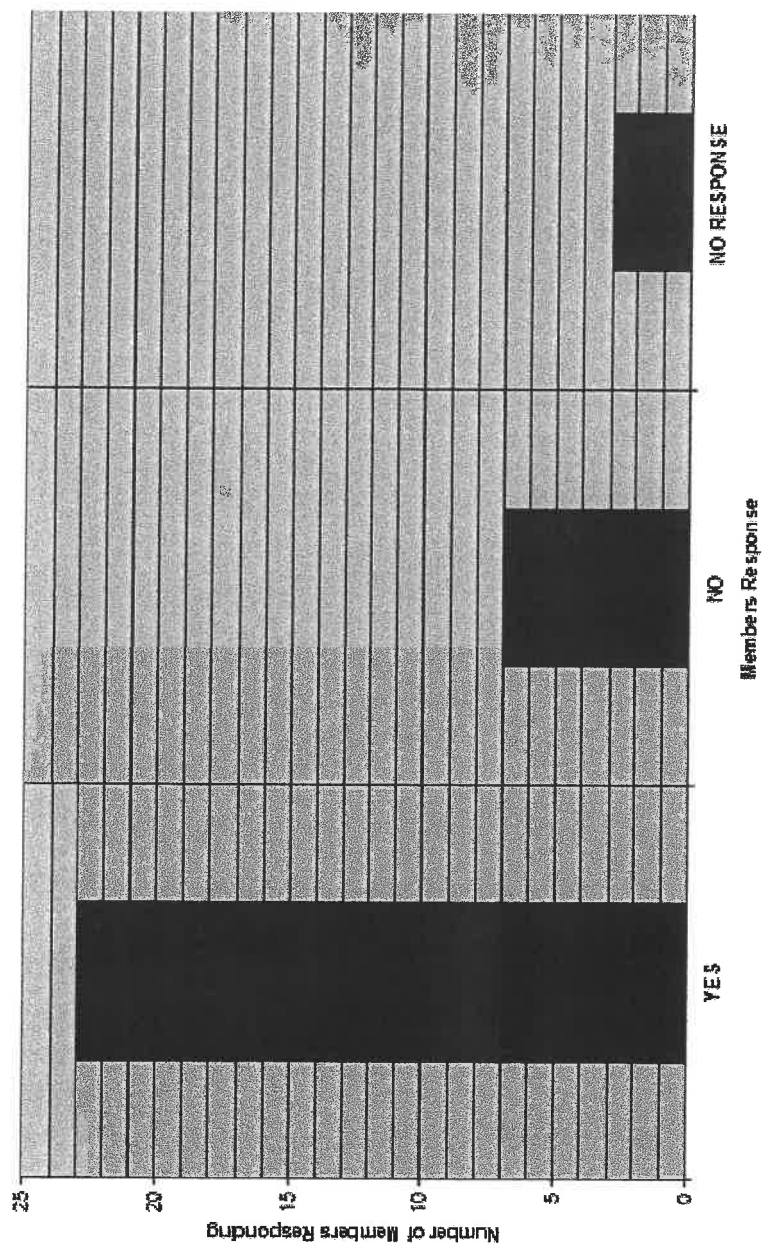
Question 2 - How Long Have You Been a Registered Voter



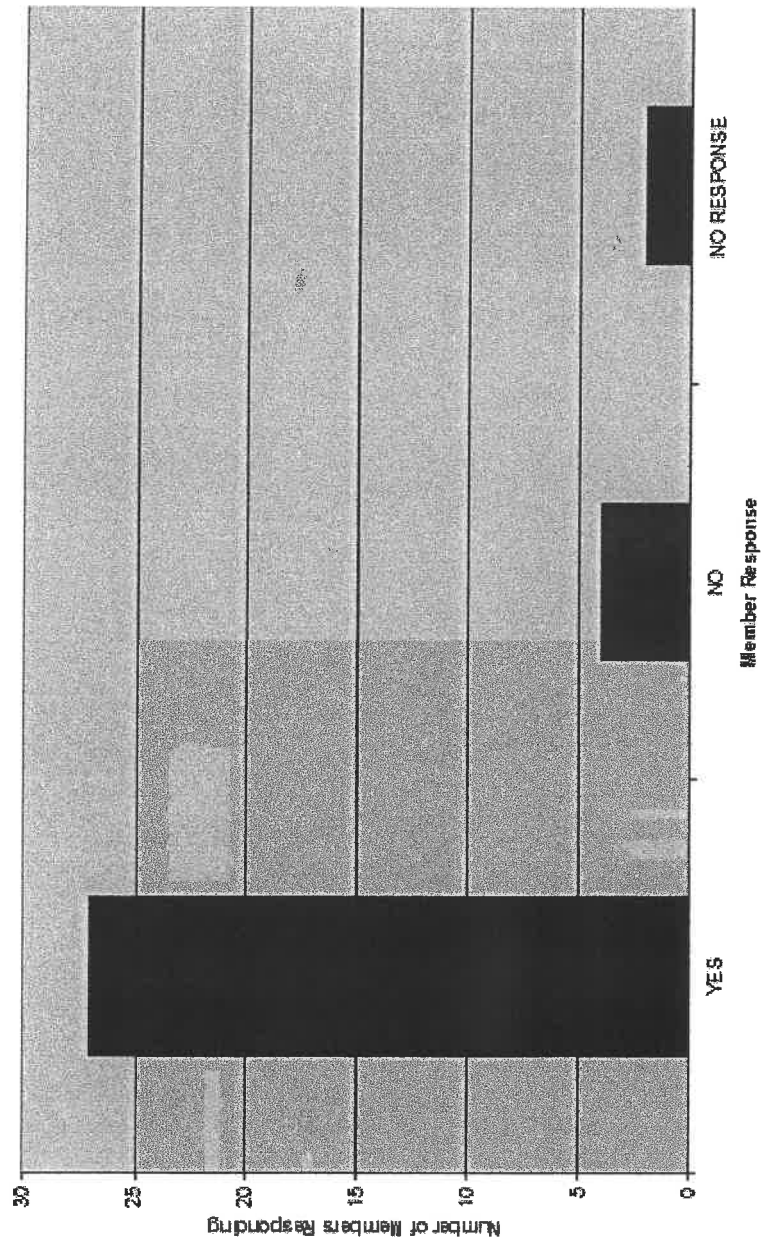
Question # 3 Why do you vote?



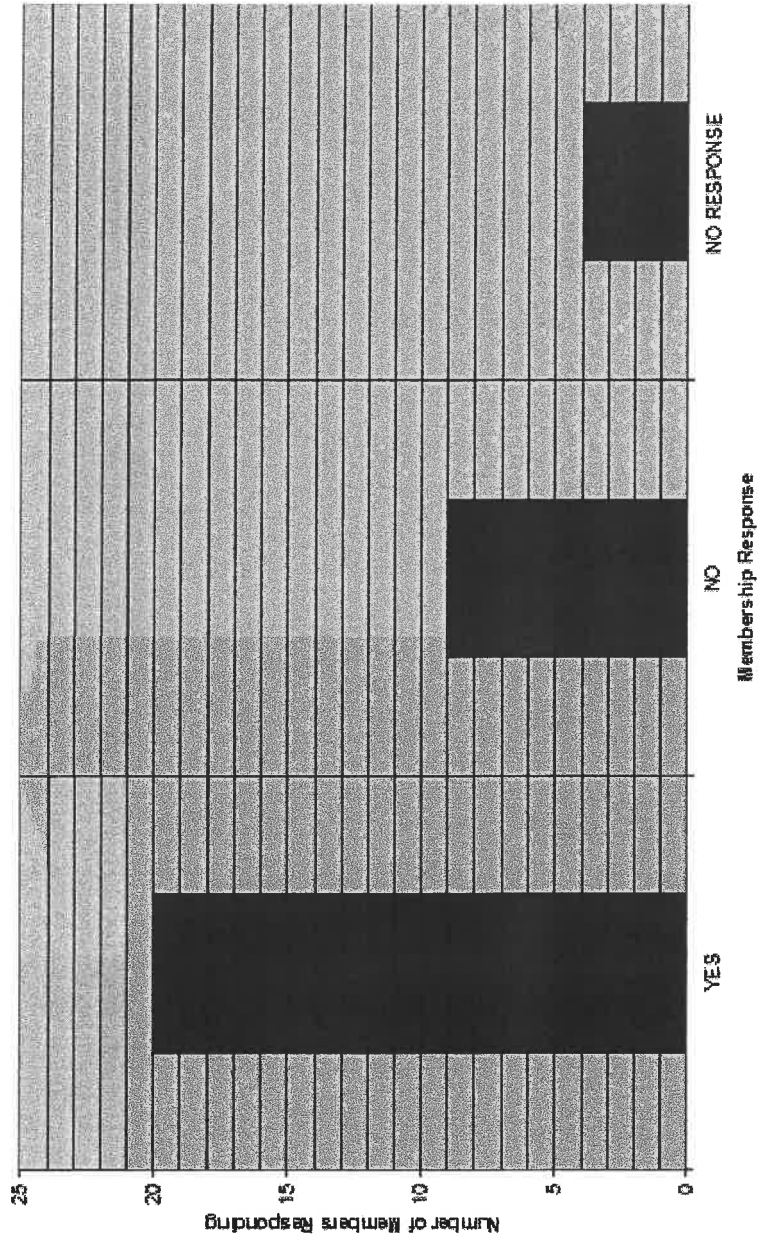
Question #4 - Does it Matter to God Whether You Vote or Not



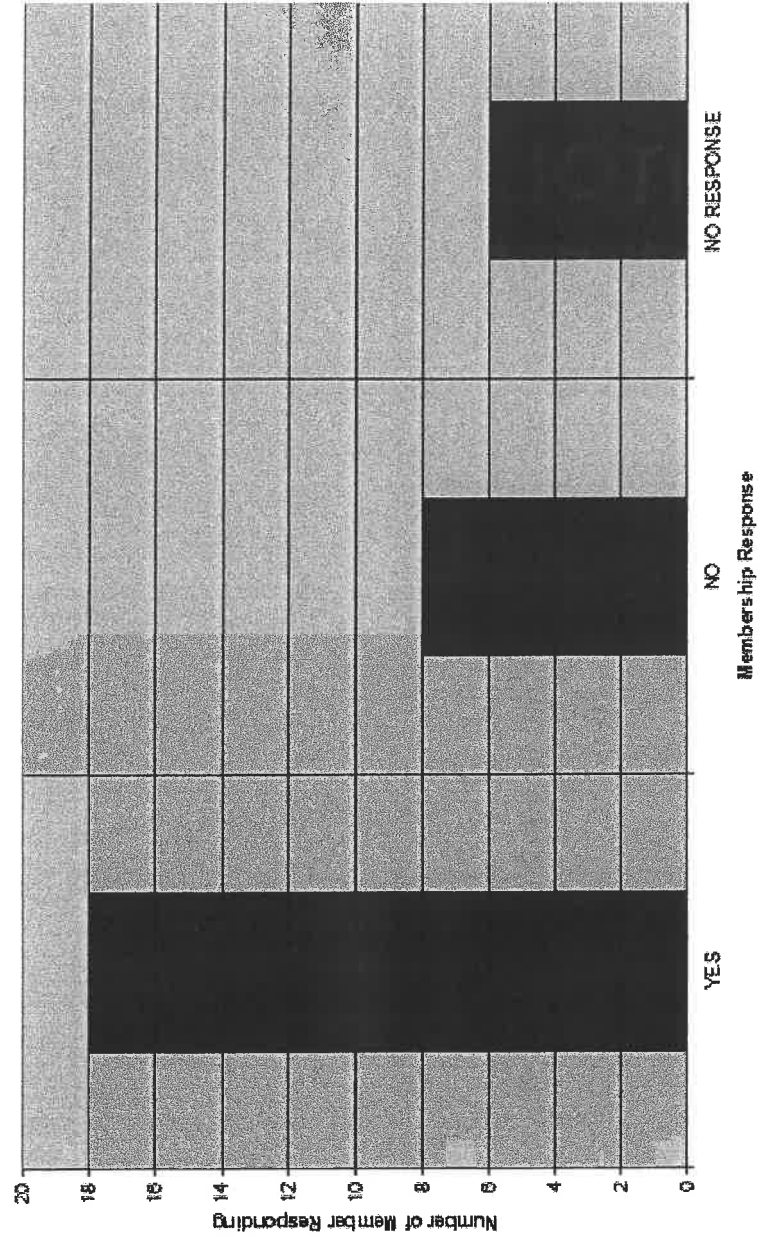
Question #5 Does Your Understanding of the Scripture Encourage You to Vote



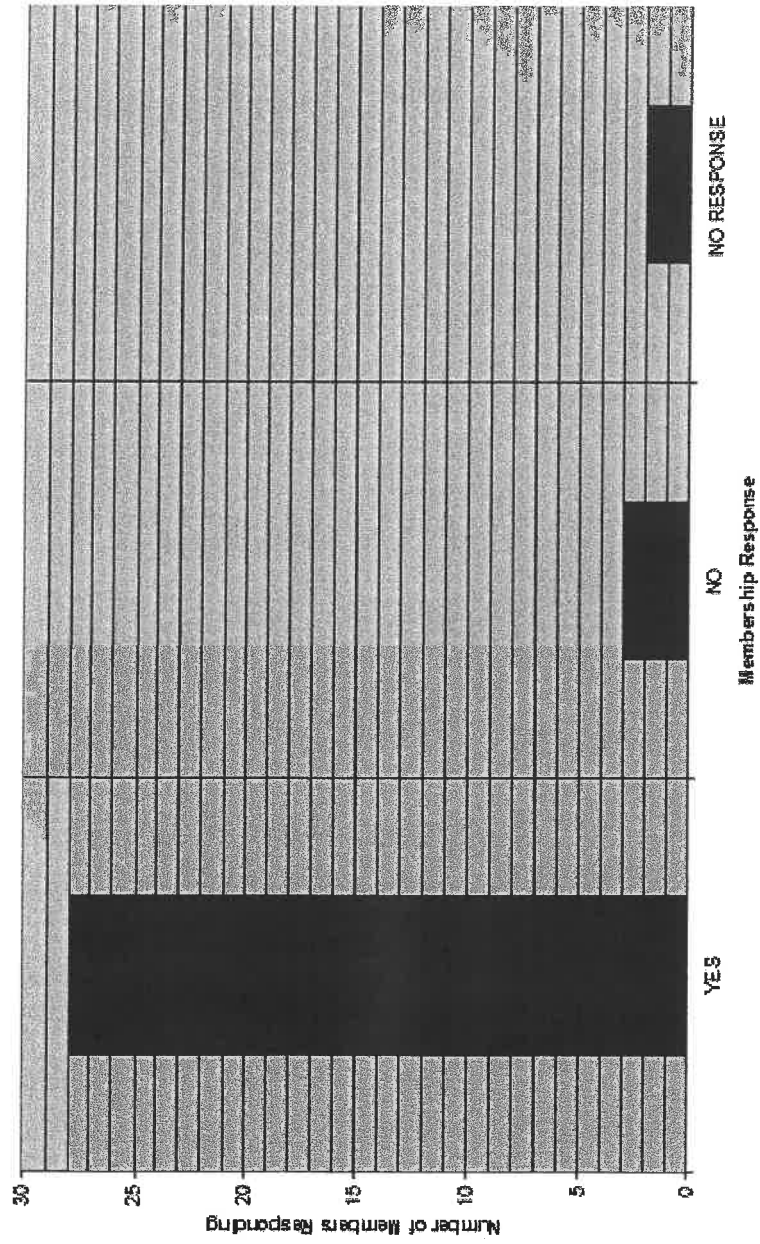
Question #6 - Have Sermons Impacted Your Interest in Voting



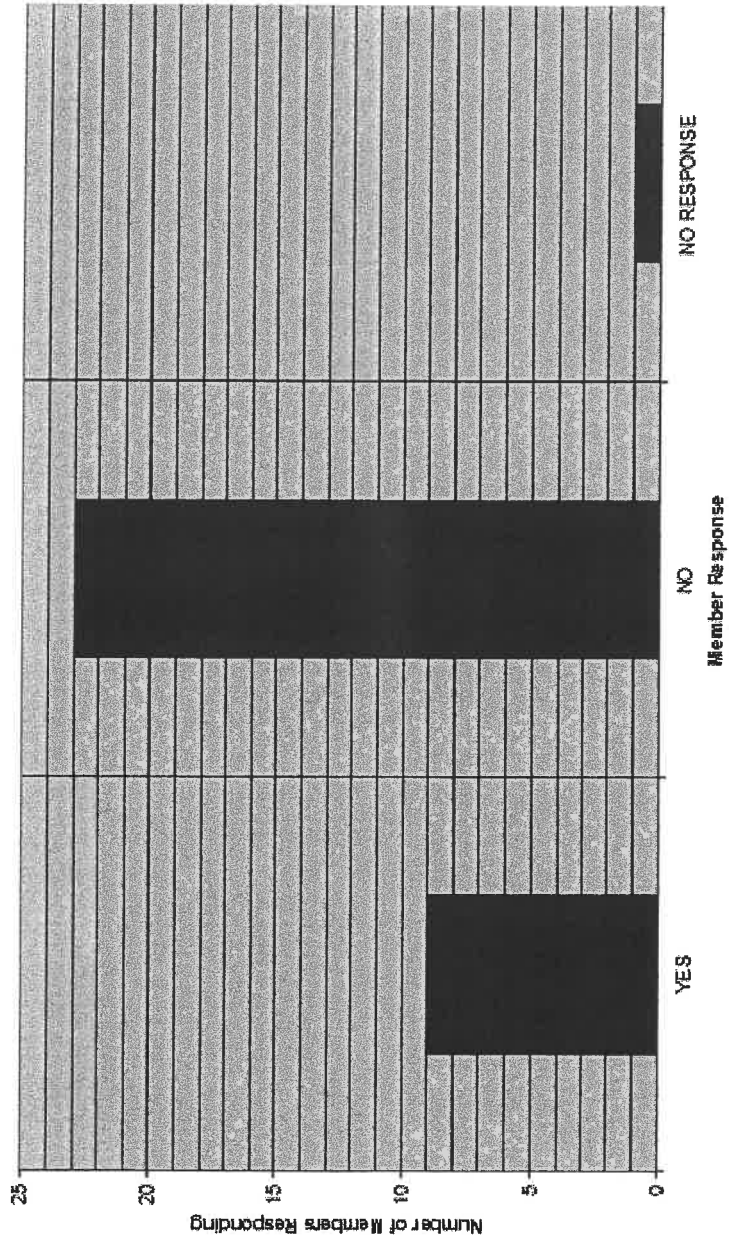
Question #7 - Do You See God in the Voting Process



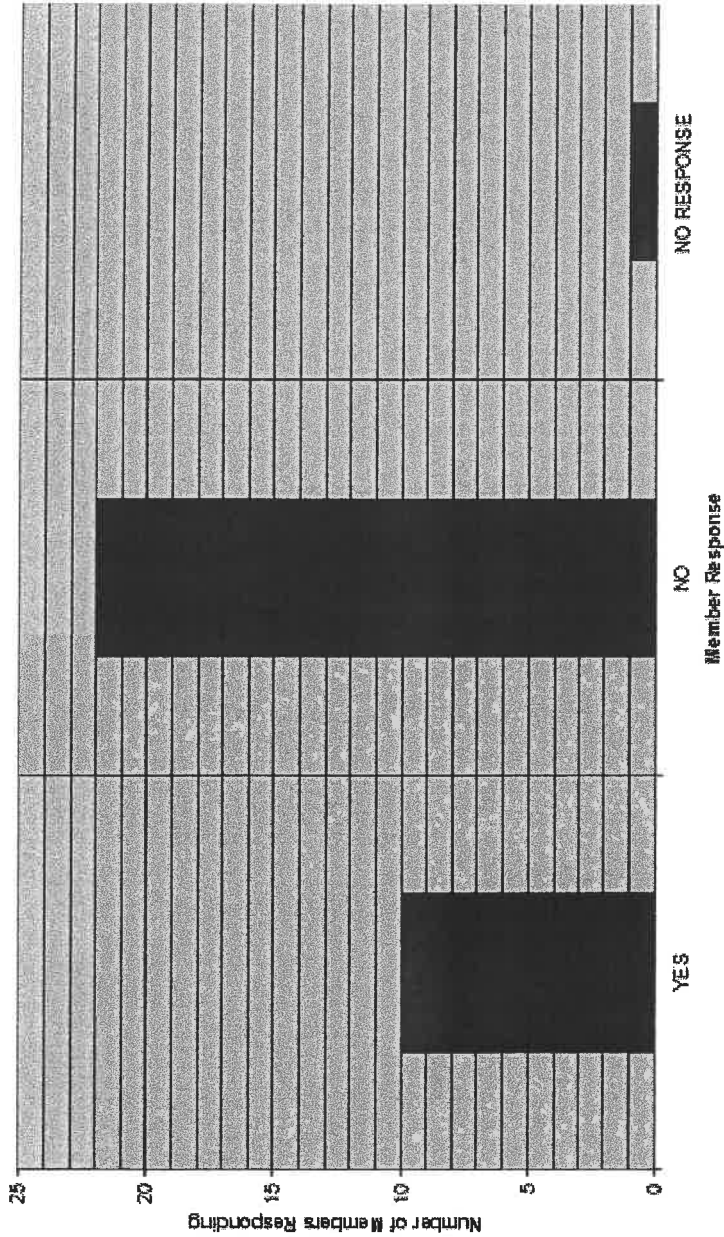
Question #8 - Do You Feel It Is Your Civic Duty Under God to Vote?



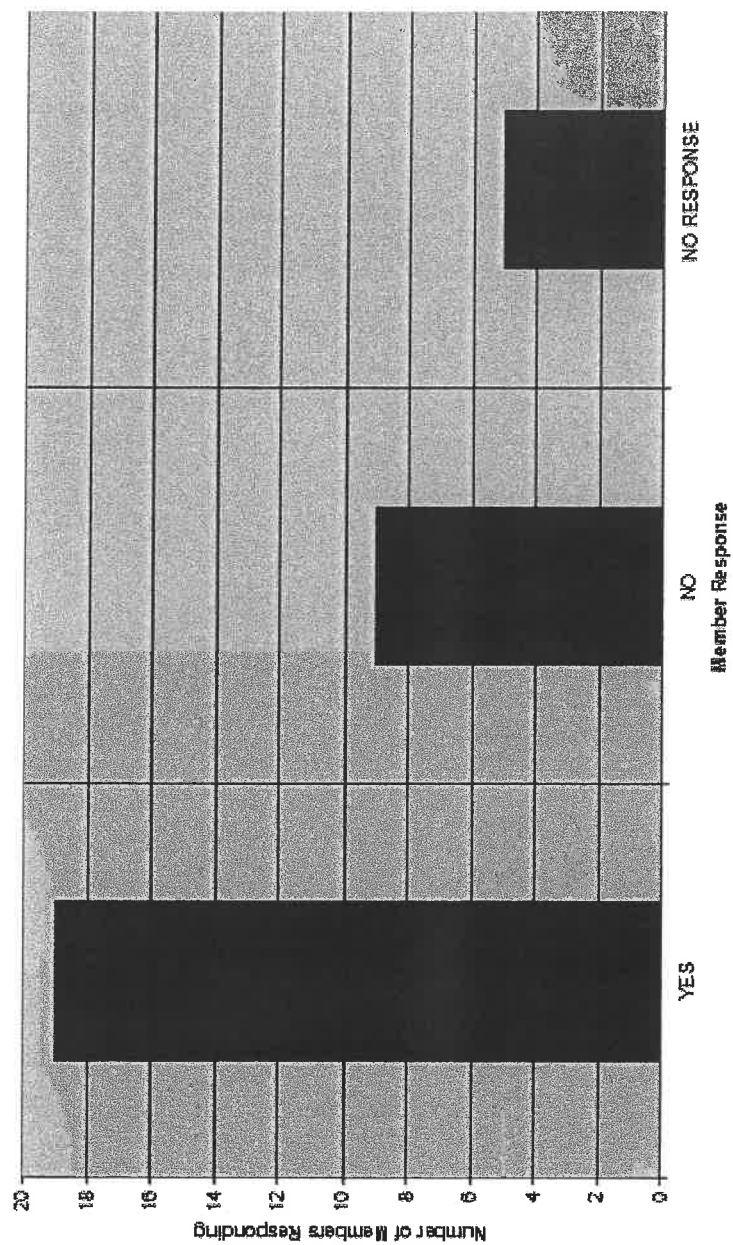
**Question #9 Have You Ever Participated in a Non-Partisan Civic Initiative Prior to the IAF
(Industrial Areas Foundation Faith Vote-columbus Voter Mobilization Drive?**



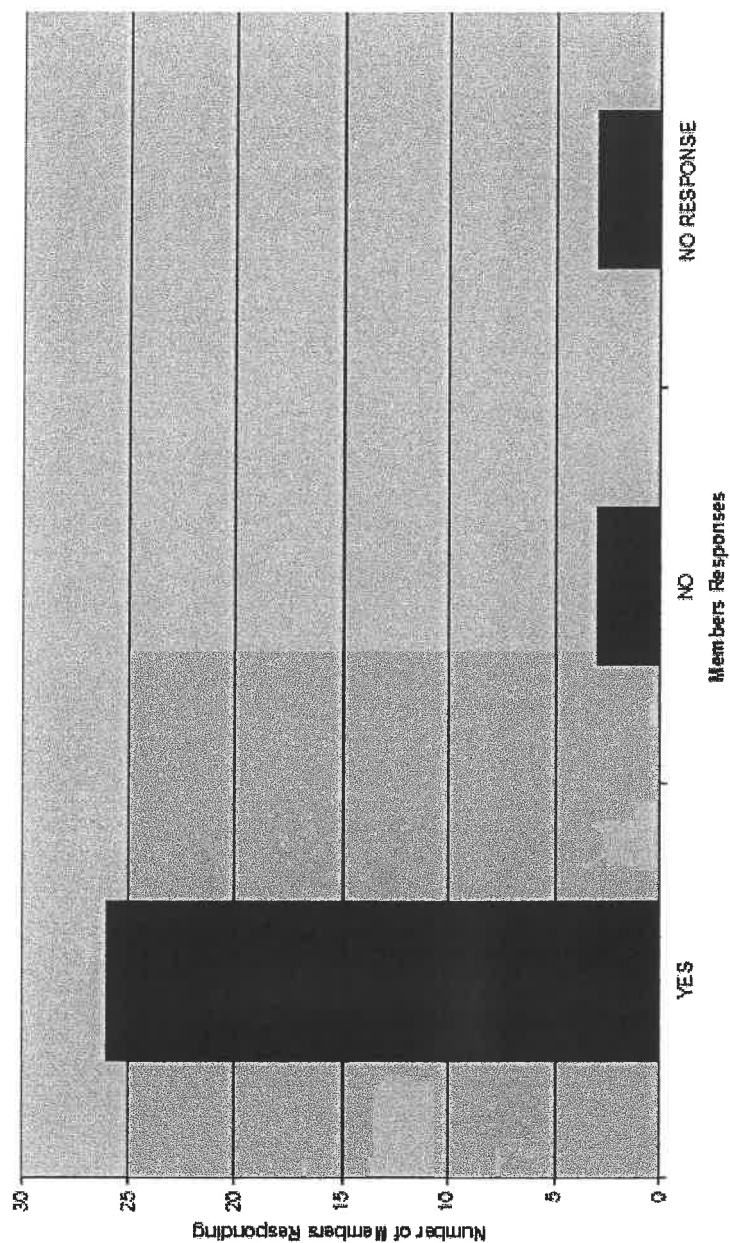
Question #10 Have You Ever Paraticipated in a Partisan Political Campaign Prior to the IAF
Faith Vote Columbus Voter Mobilization Drive



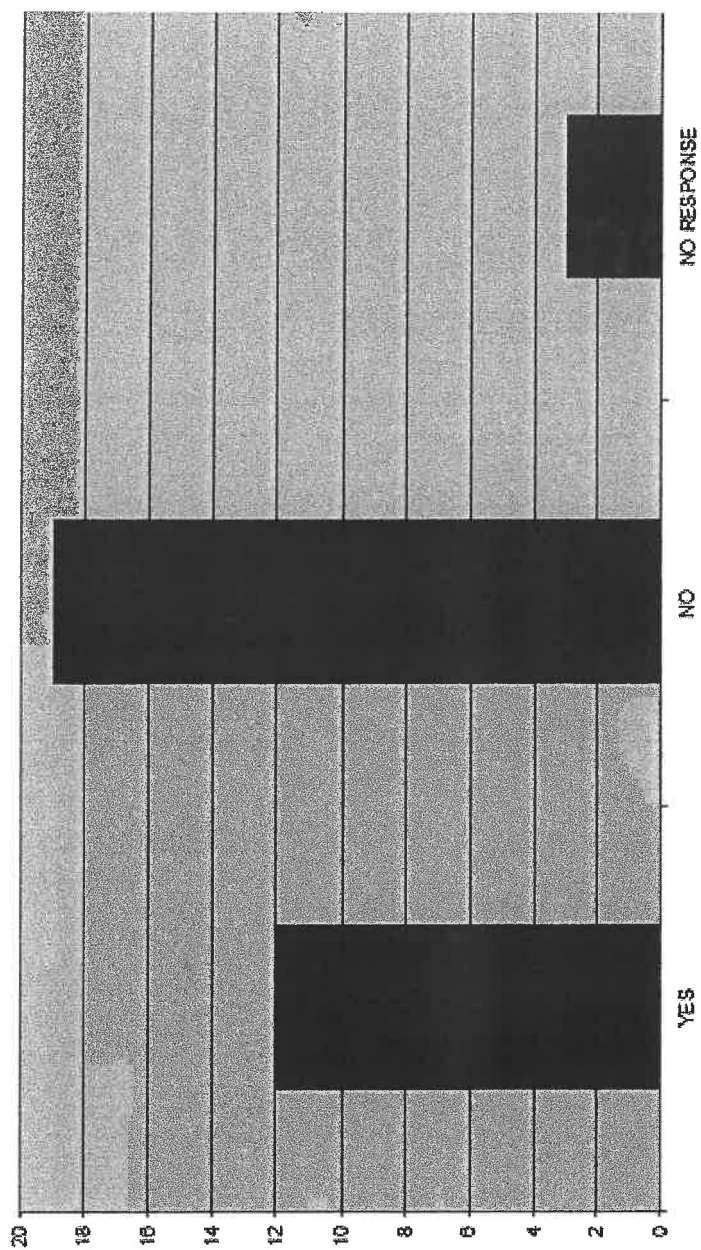
Question #11 Do You Feel That the Non-Partisan Process Works Better Than Working On A Political Campaign and Telling People Who To Vote For?



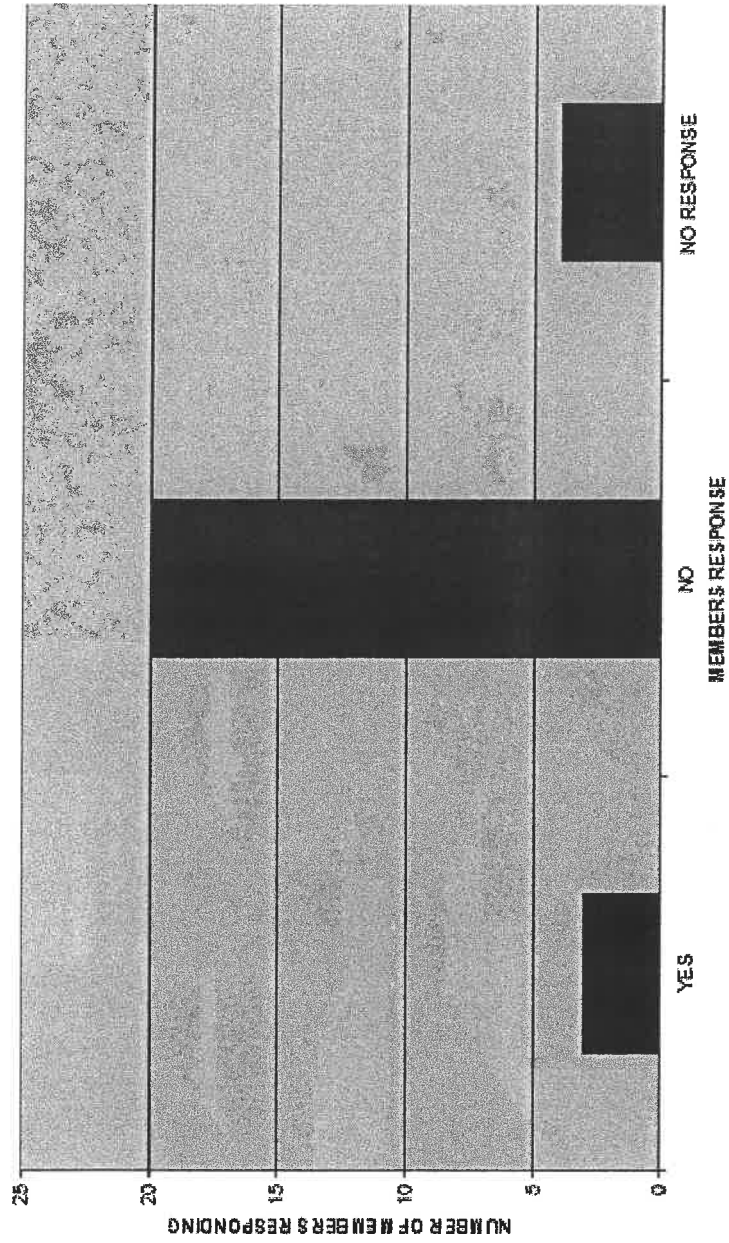
**QUESTION 12a Participation in Faith Vote Activities August 13, 2006 Asbury North
 Congregation Meets to Address Concerns the Next Governor of Ohio Should Address**



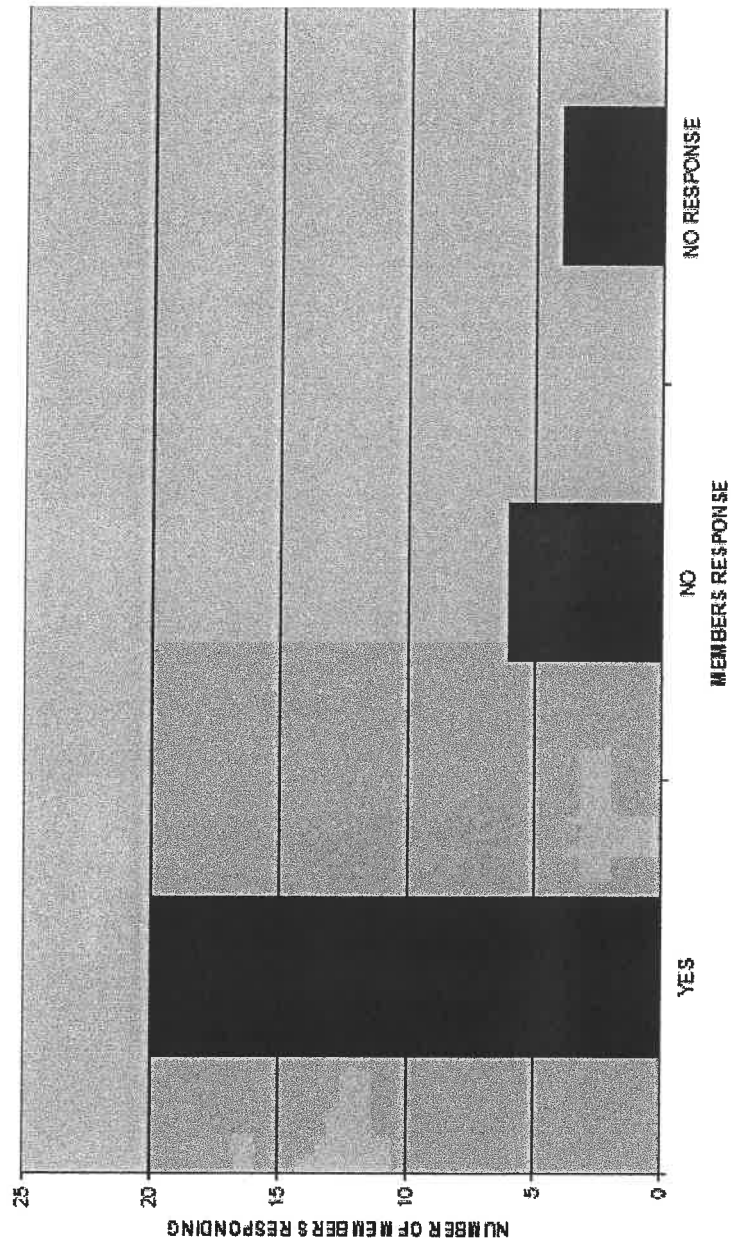
QUESTION 12b PLEASE CHECK EACH FAITH VOTE COLUMBUS ACTIVITY THAT YOU PARTICIPATED IN - SEPTEMBER 7, 2006 ST. PAUL AME; CONVENTION OF PARTICIPANTS (CHURCHES, SYNAGOGUES, UNIONS, ETC.



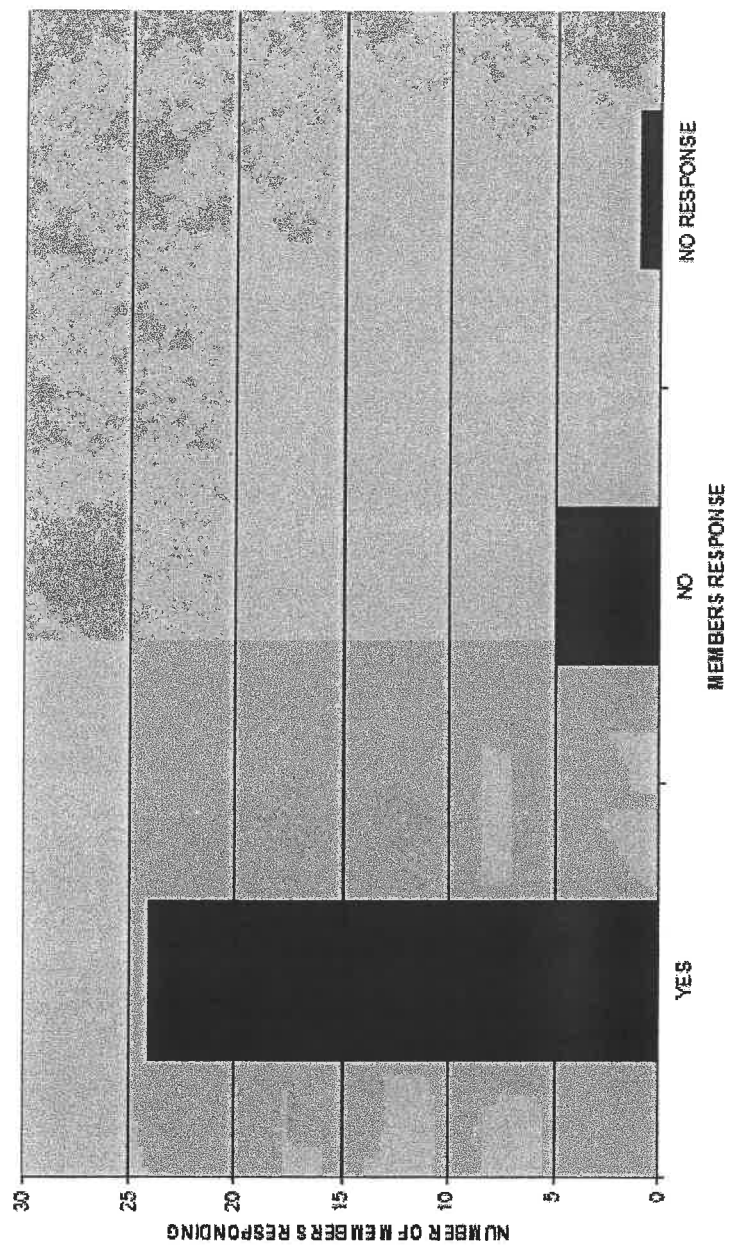
QUESTION 12c FAITH VOTE ACTIVITY PARTICIPATED - SEPTEMBER 21, 2006 NEW LIFE UC
ORIENTATION AND TRAINING



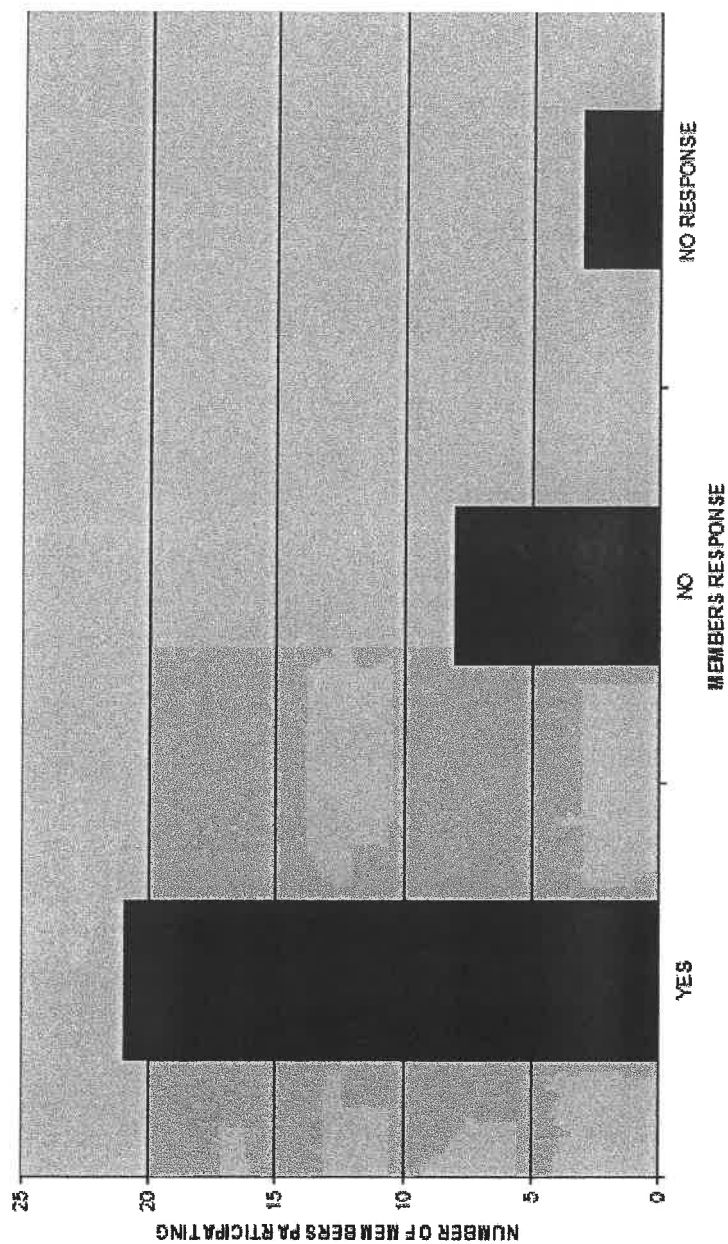
QUESTION 12d FAITH VOTE COLUMBUS ACTIVITY THAT YOU PARTICIPATED IN -
SEPTEMBER 28, 2006 AT ASBURY NORTH UMC RATIFICATION OF CONCERNS



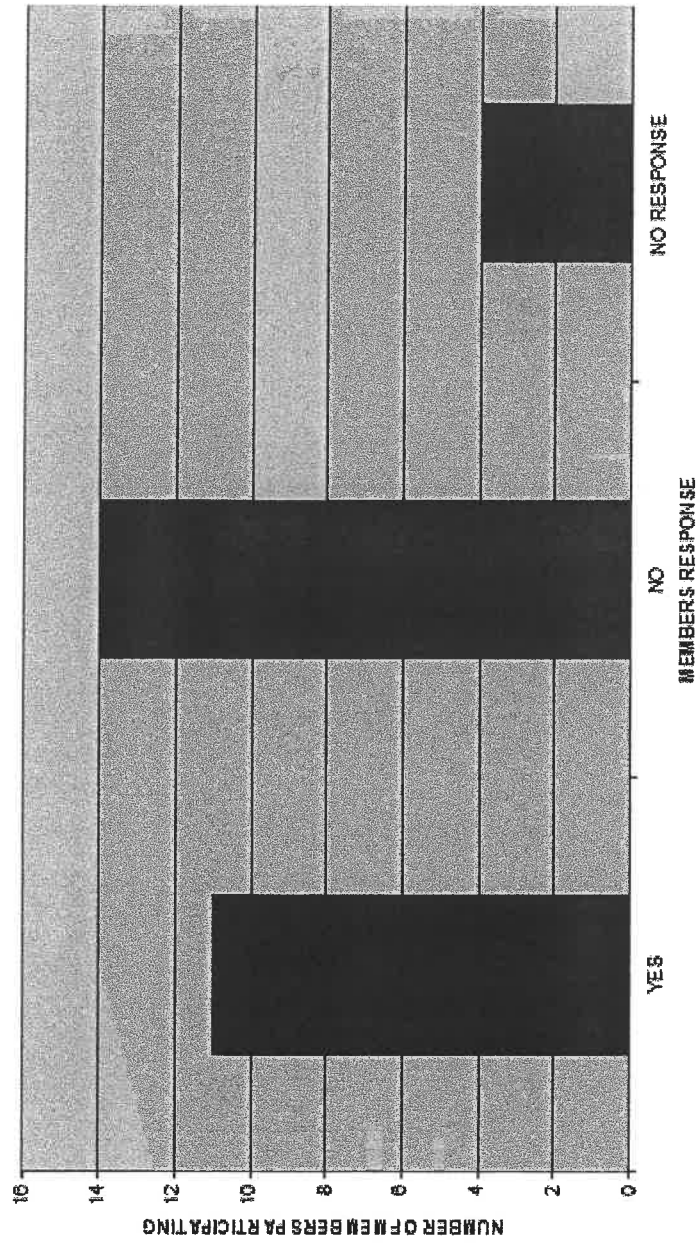
QUESTION 12e FAITH VOTE ACTIVITY THAT YOU PARTICIPATED IN - CORINTHINA
MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH QUESTION AND AN SWER PERIOD OF CANDIDATES



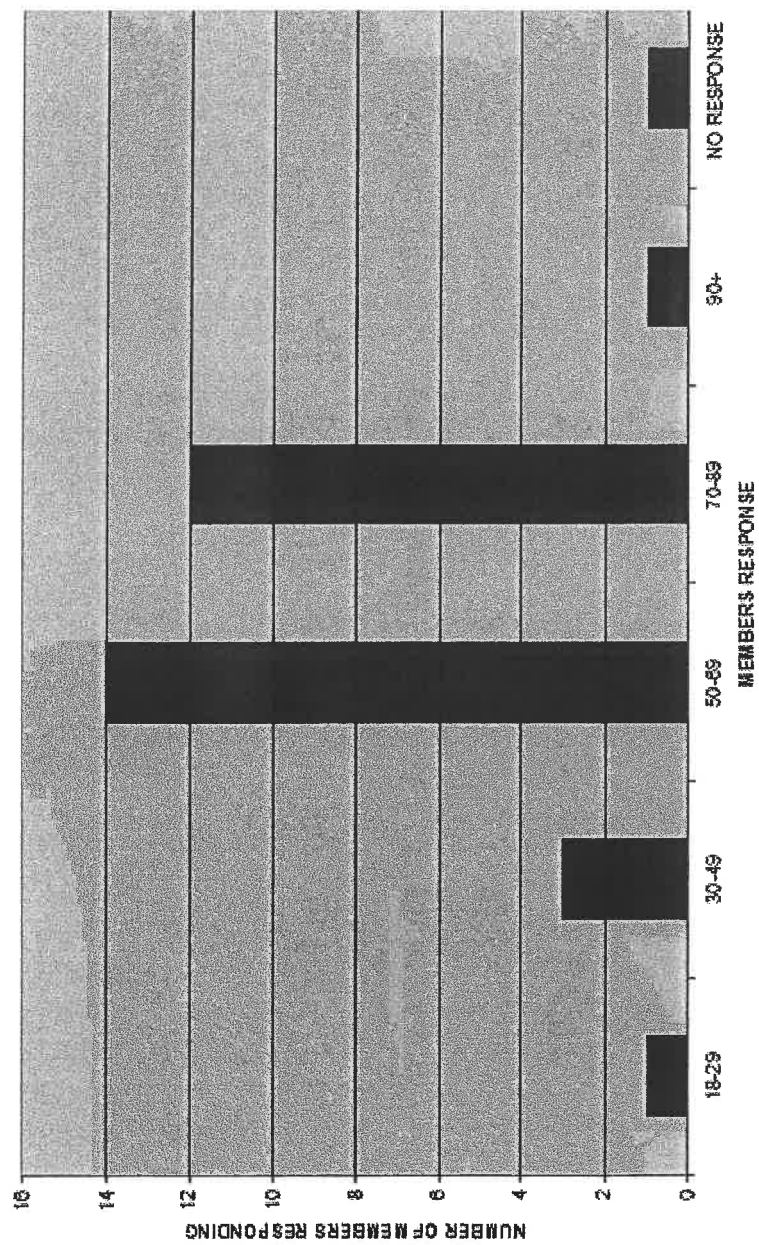
QUESTION 12f WHAT FAITH VOTE ACTIVITY DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN - NOVEMBER 6, 2006
WOODLAND CHRISTIAN CHURCH NEIGHBORHOOD WALKS



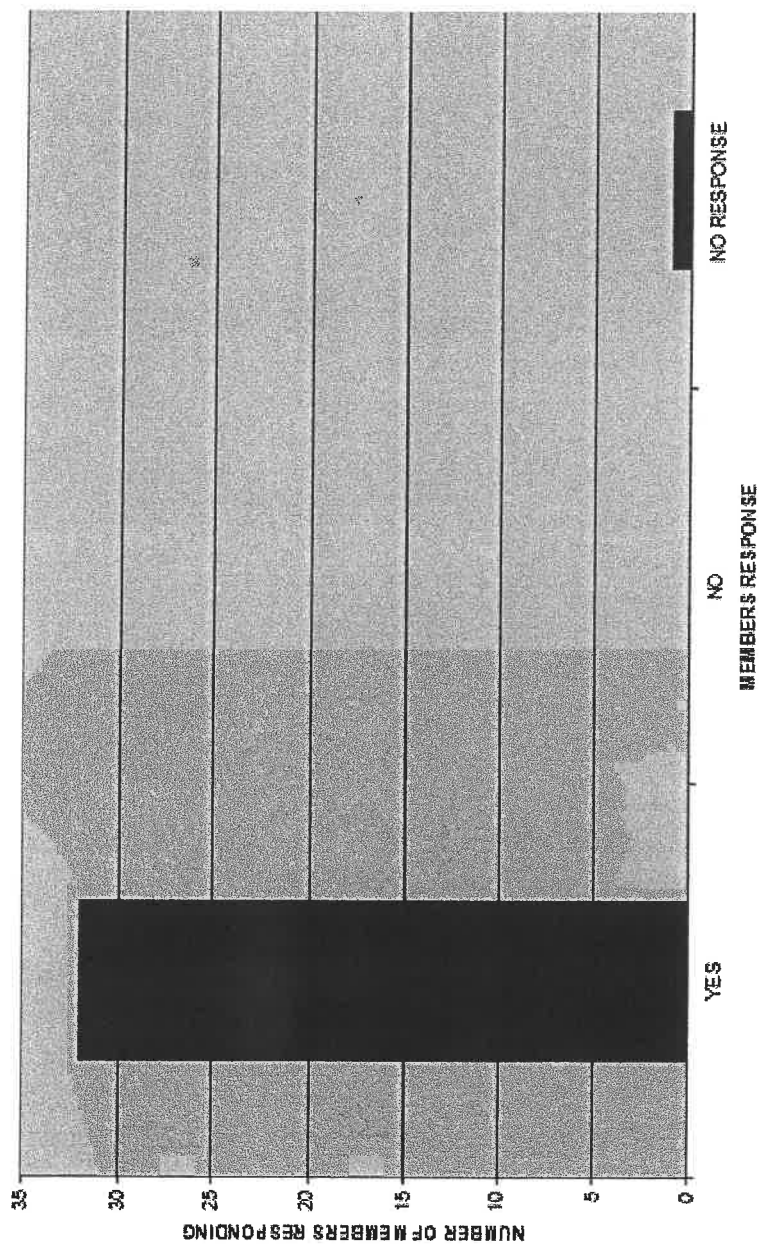
QUESTION 12g WHAT FAITH VOTE ACTIVITY DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN - NOVEMBER 7, 2006
 WOODLAND CHRISTIAN CHURCH LEAFLETING POLLS, PHONE BANKS PROVIDING
 TRANSPORT TO POLLS FOR VOTERS, ETC



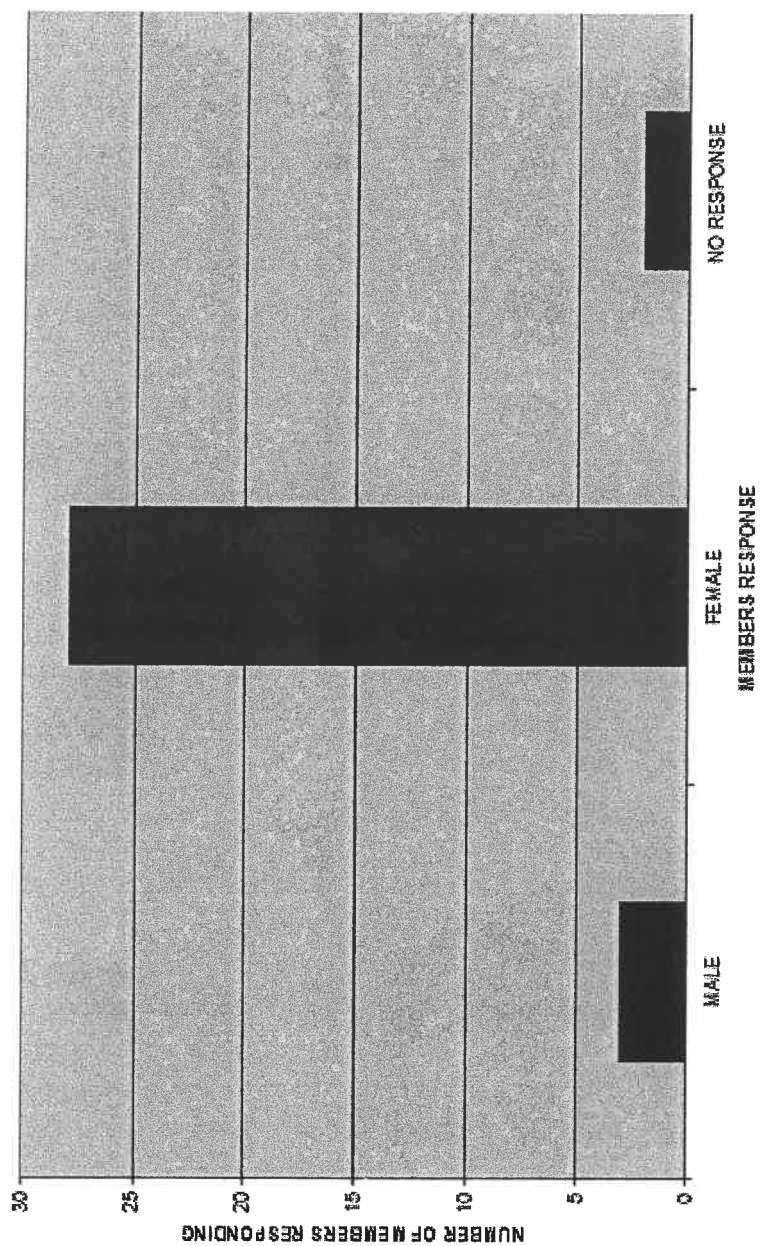
QUESTION #13 WHAT AGE GROUP DO YOU FALL WITHIN



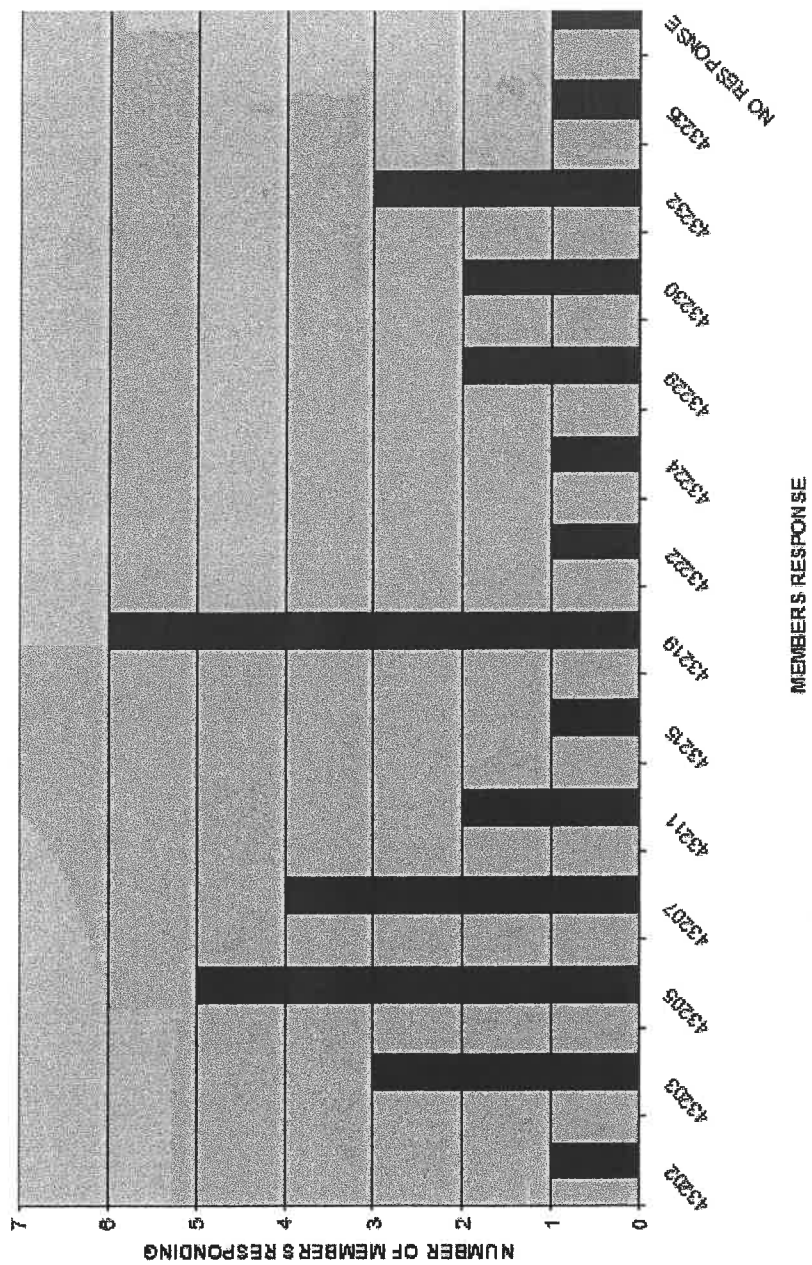
QUESTION #14 CAN VOTING CHANGE THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF A COMMUNITY



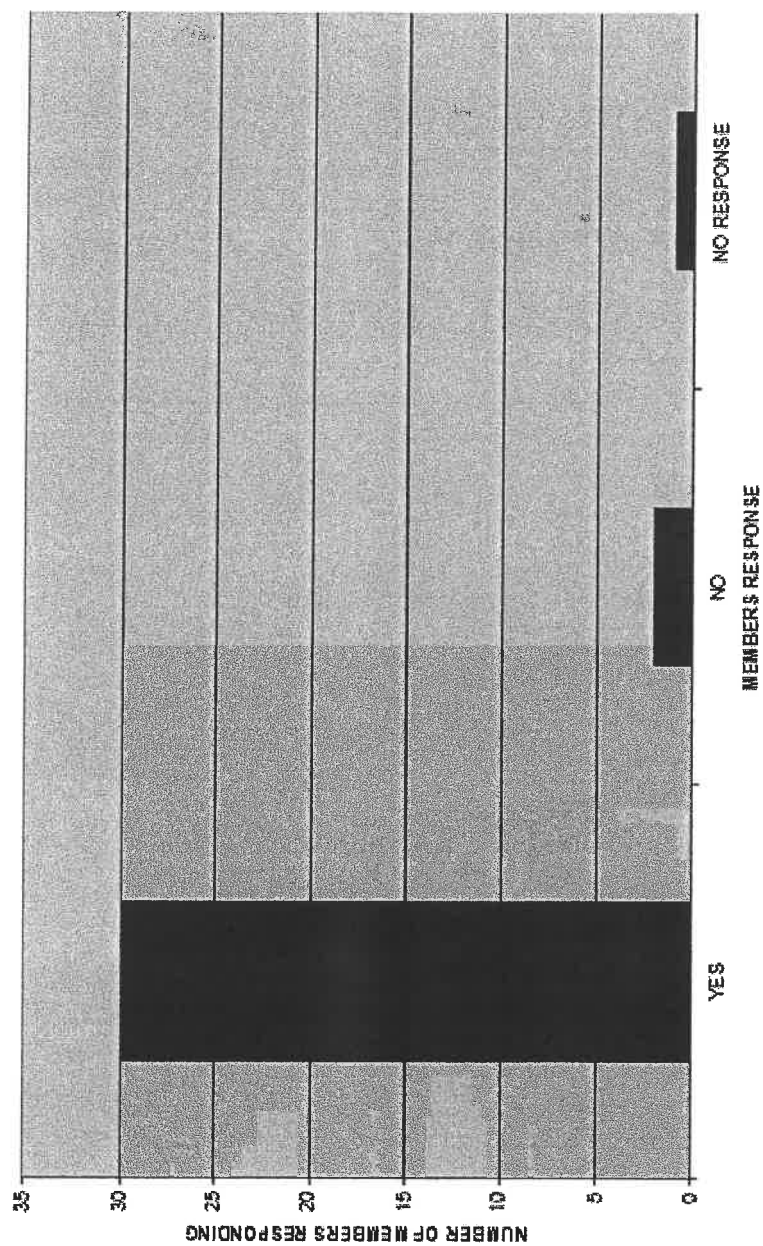
QUESTION #15 ARE YOU MALE OR FEMALE



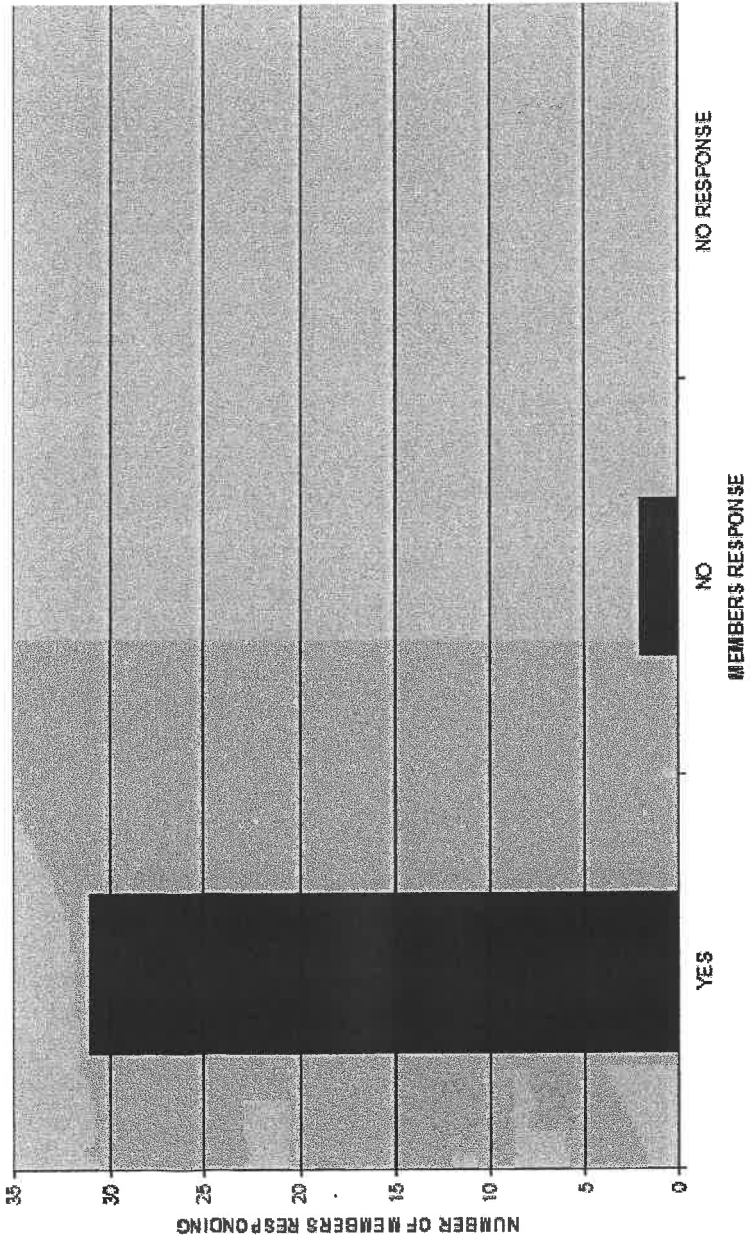
QUESTION #16 WHAT IS YOUR ZIP CODE

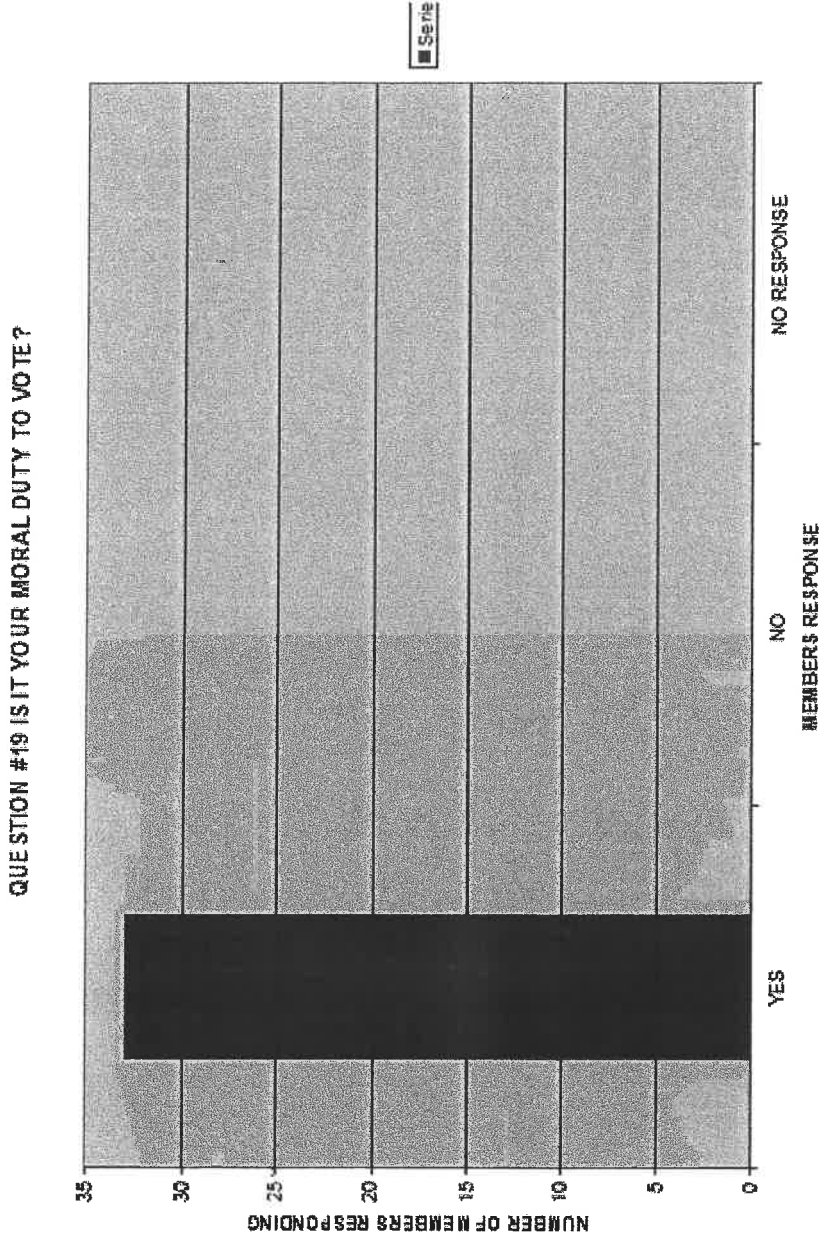


QUESTION #17 IS VOTER TURNOUT IMPORTANT TO YOU?

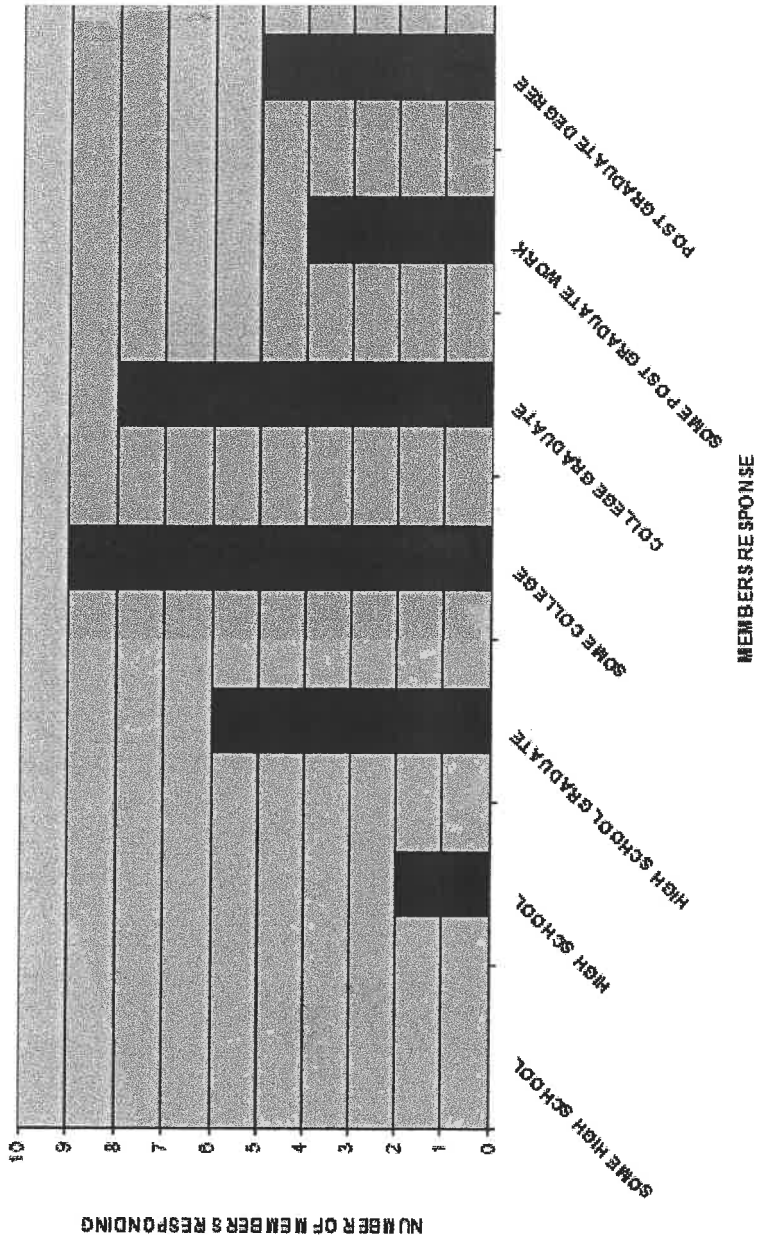


QUESTION #18 SHOULD THE CHURCH BE INVOLVED IN ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO VOTE?

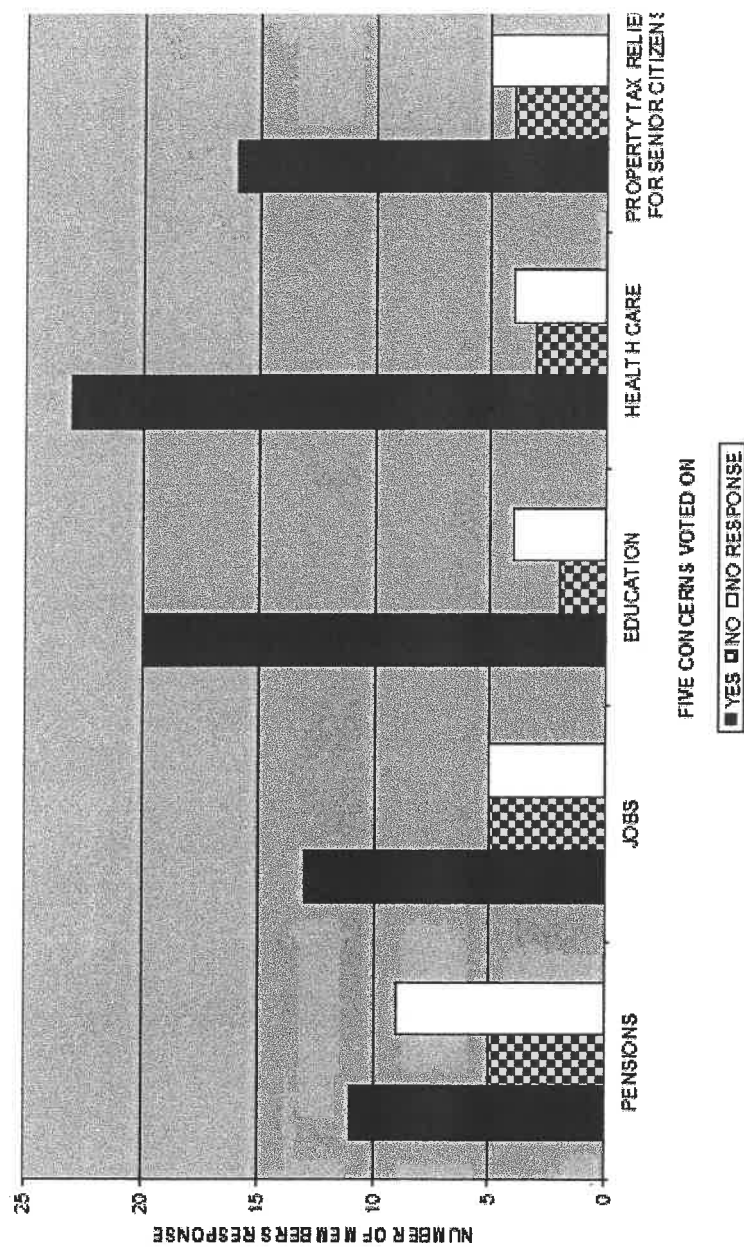




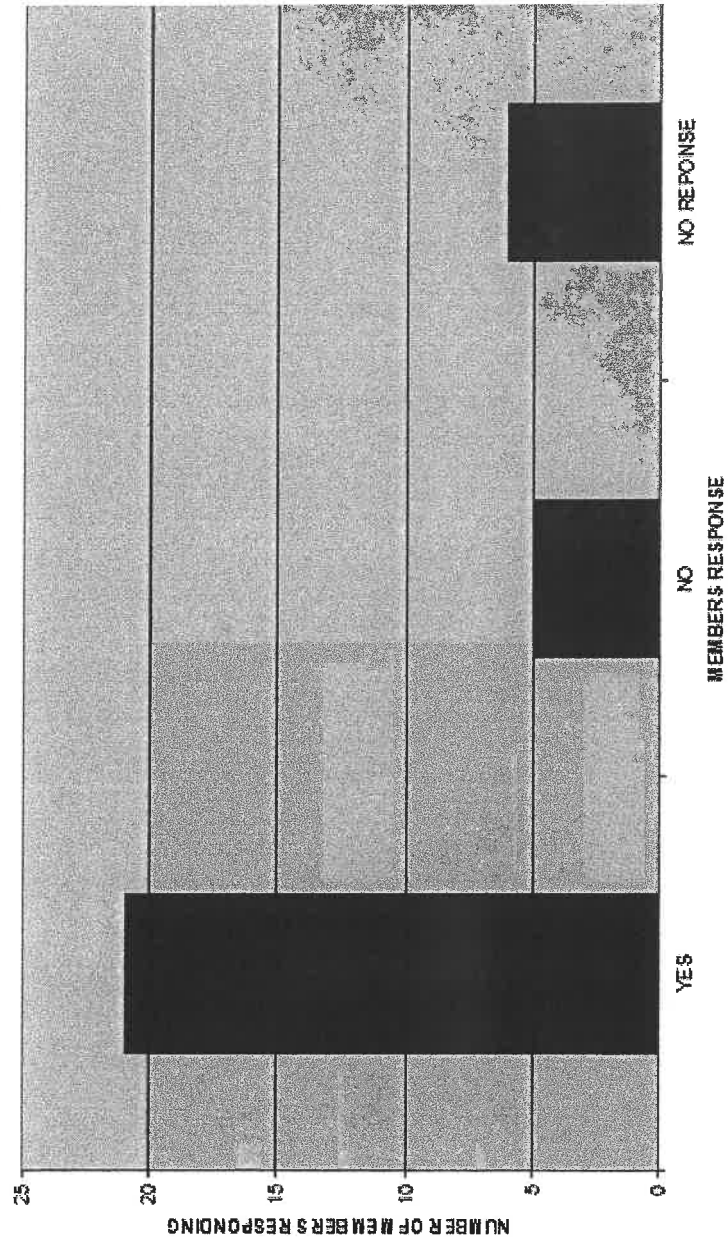
QUESTION #20 WHAT IS YOUR HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION



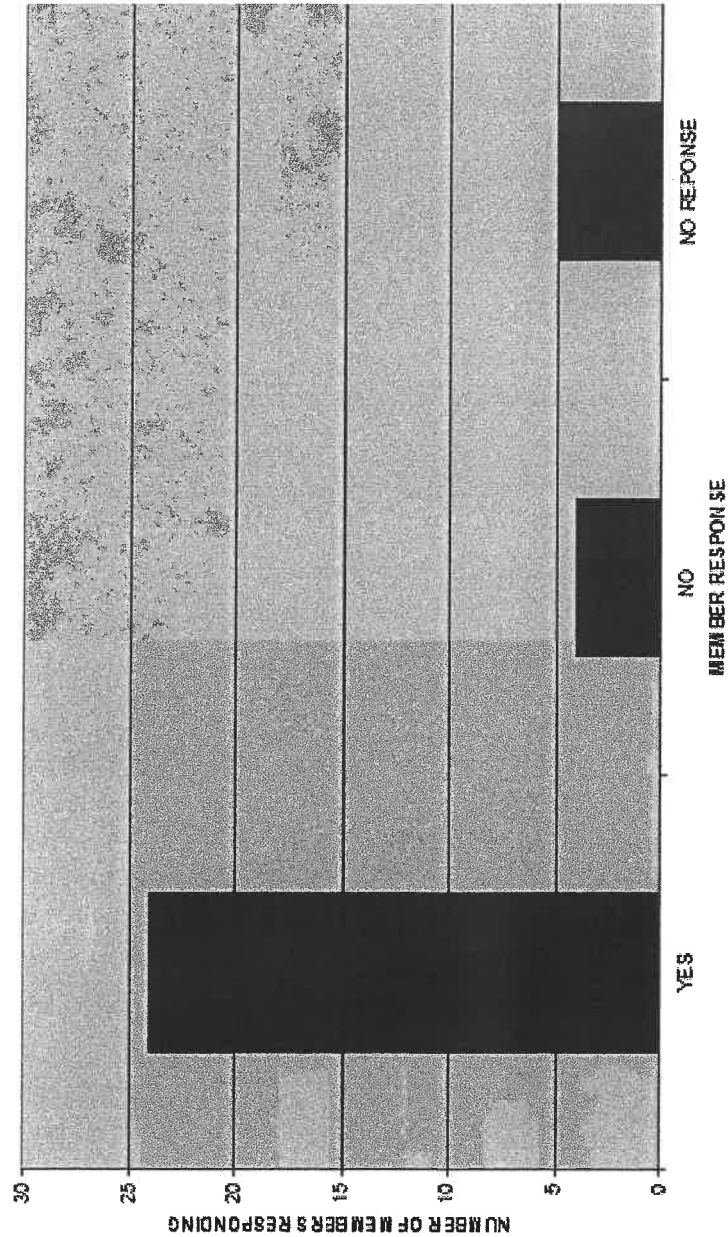
QUESTION #22 WHICH OF THE FIVE CONCERNS VOTED ON BY THE IAF FAITH VOTE PARTICIPANTS HAD THE MOST IMPACT ON YOU



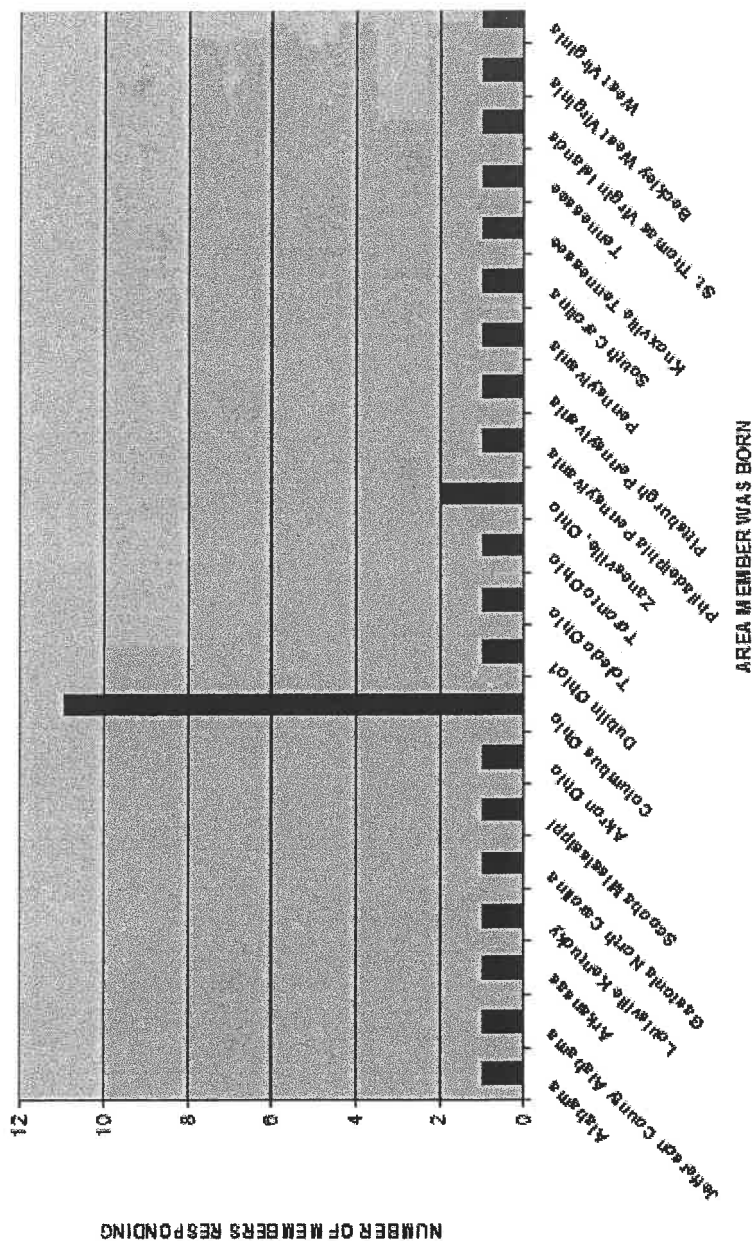
QUESTION #23 DID YOU ACHIEVE A PERSONAL BENEFIT BECAUSE OF YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE VOTER MOBILIZATION PROCESS?



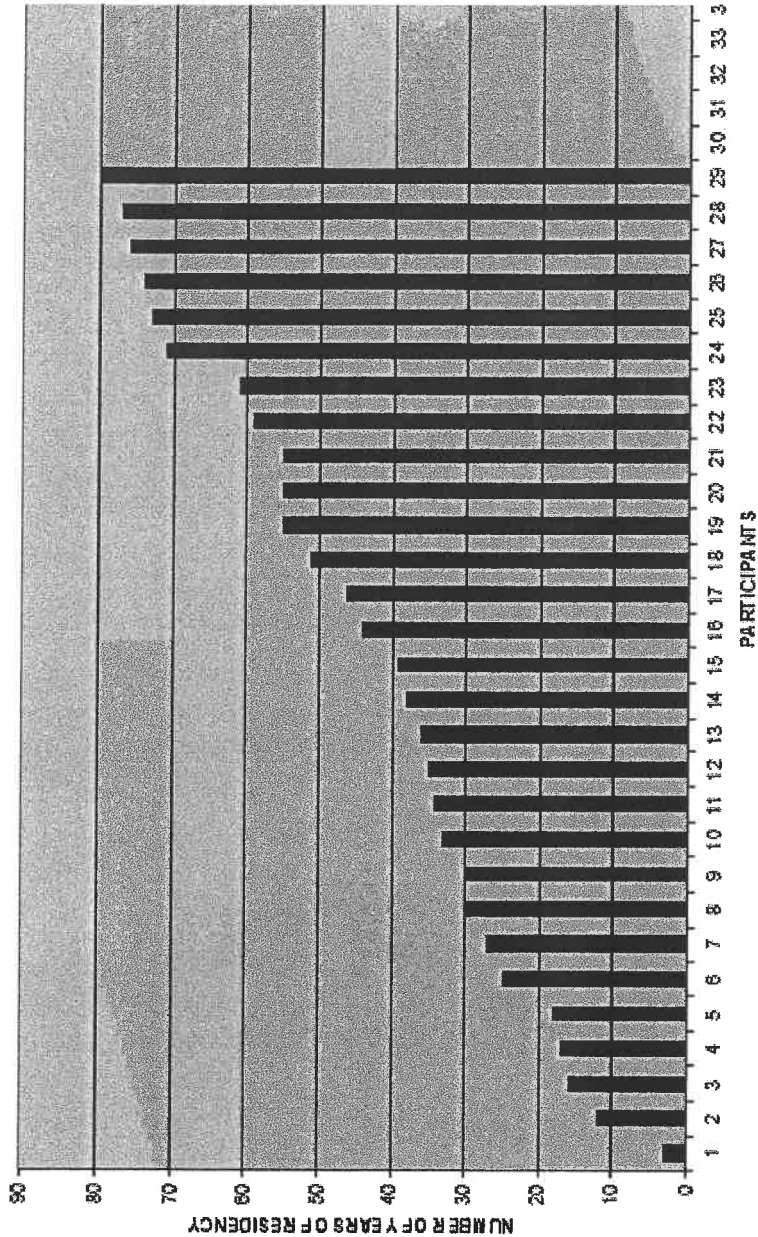
QUESTION #24 DID YOU SENSE THE PRESENCE OF GOD AS YOU PARTICIPATED IN THE VOTING MOBILIZATION EFFORT?



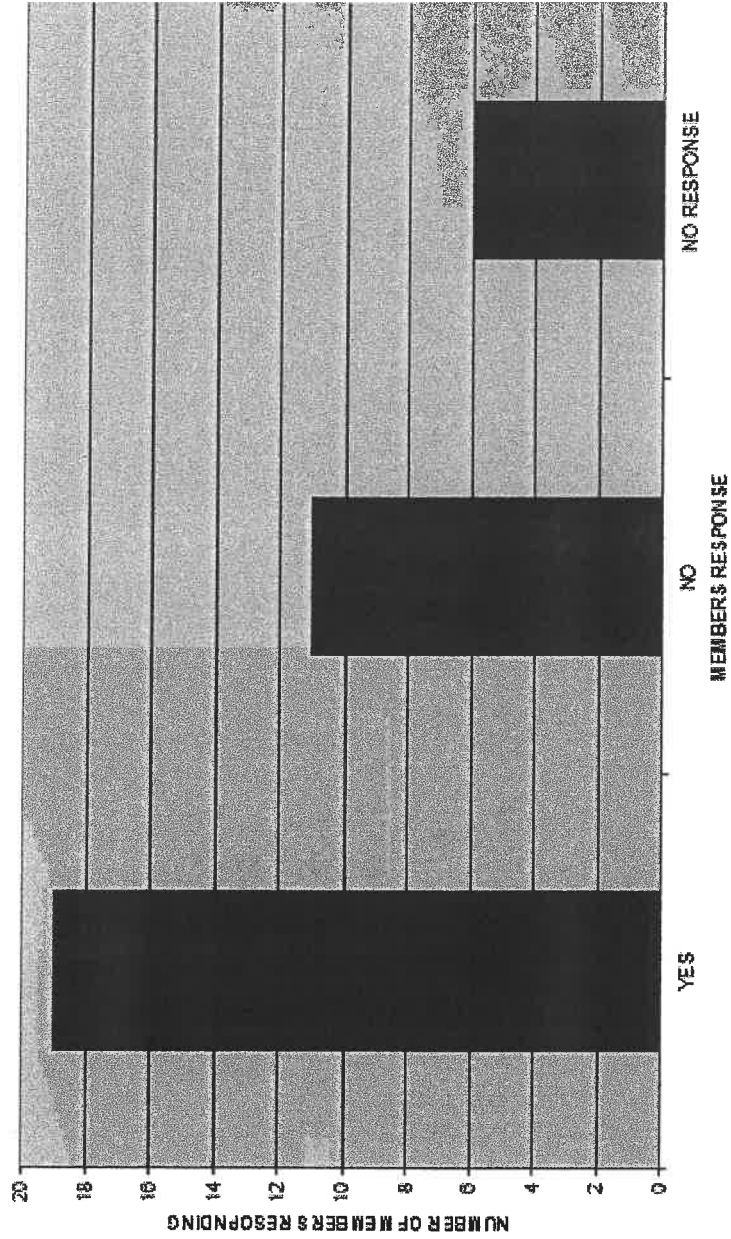
QUESTION #25 WHERE WERE YOU BORN



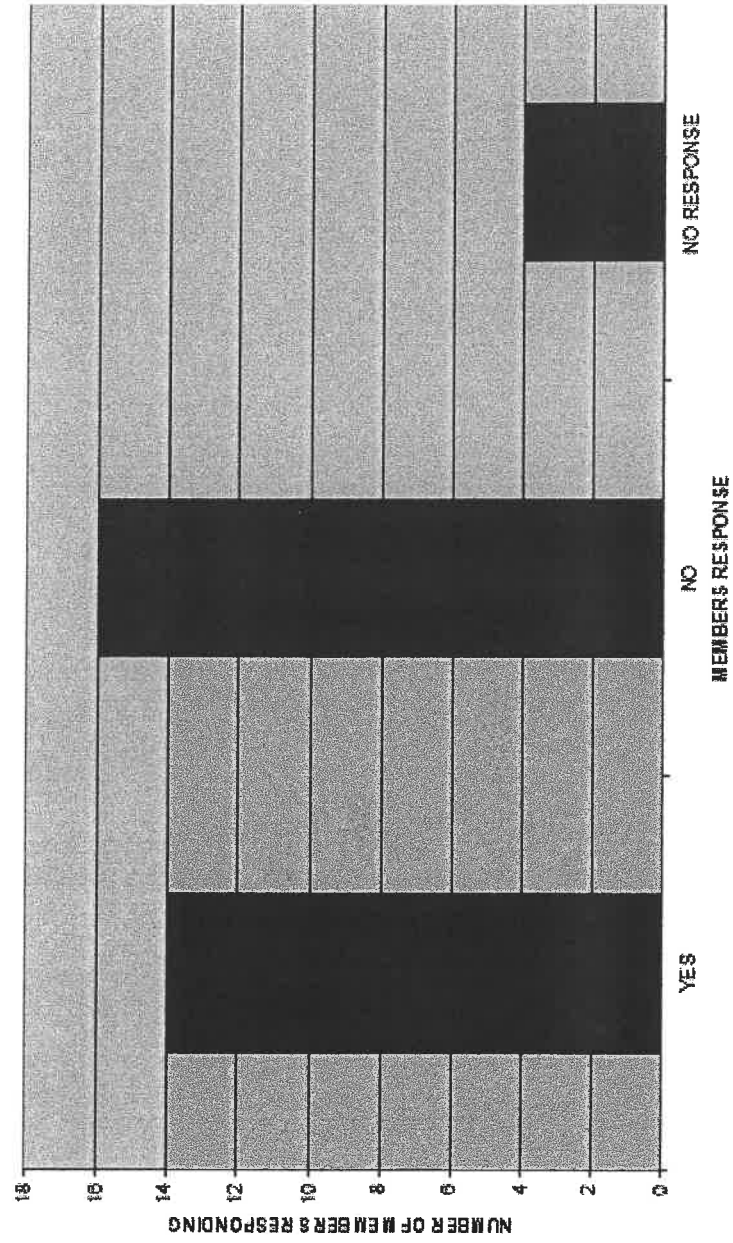
QUESTION #26 HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A RESIDENT IN CENTRAL OHIO?



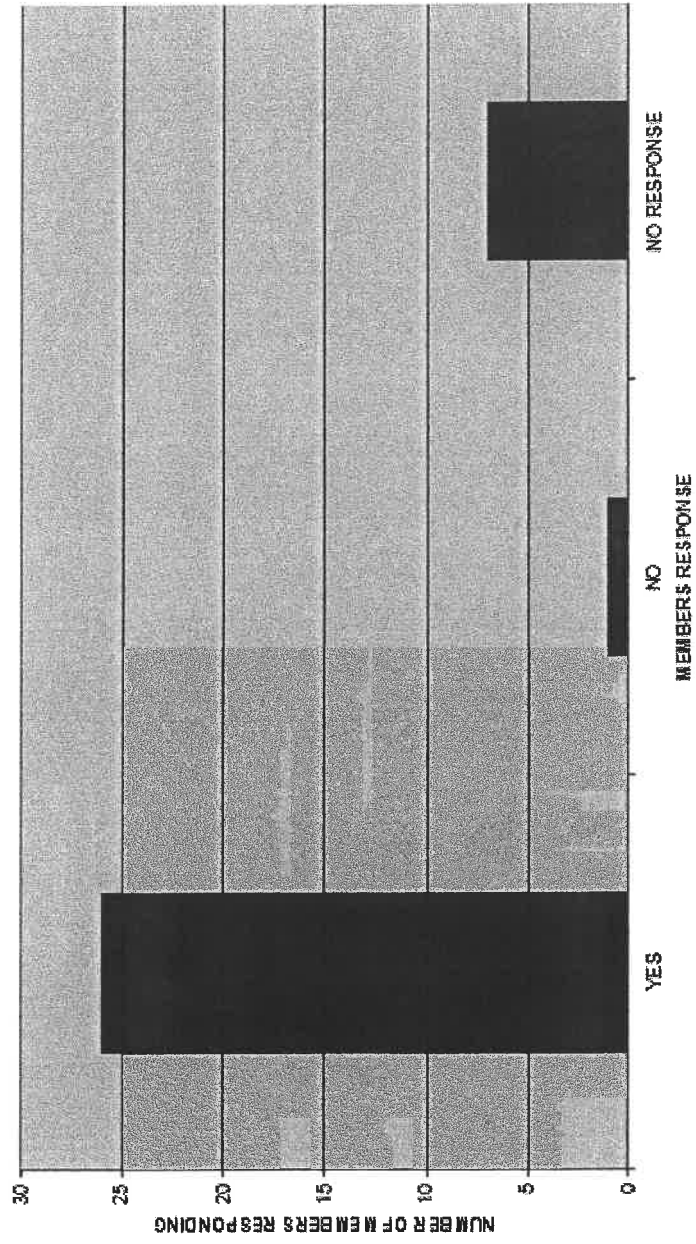
QUESTION #27 PRIOR TO THE IAF VOTER MOBILIZATION CAMPAIGN DID YOU THINK THE VOTING PROCESS WAS EFFECTIVE



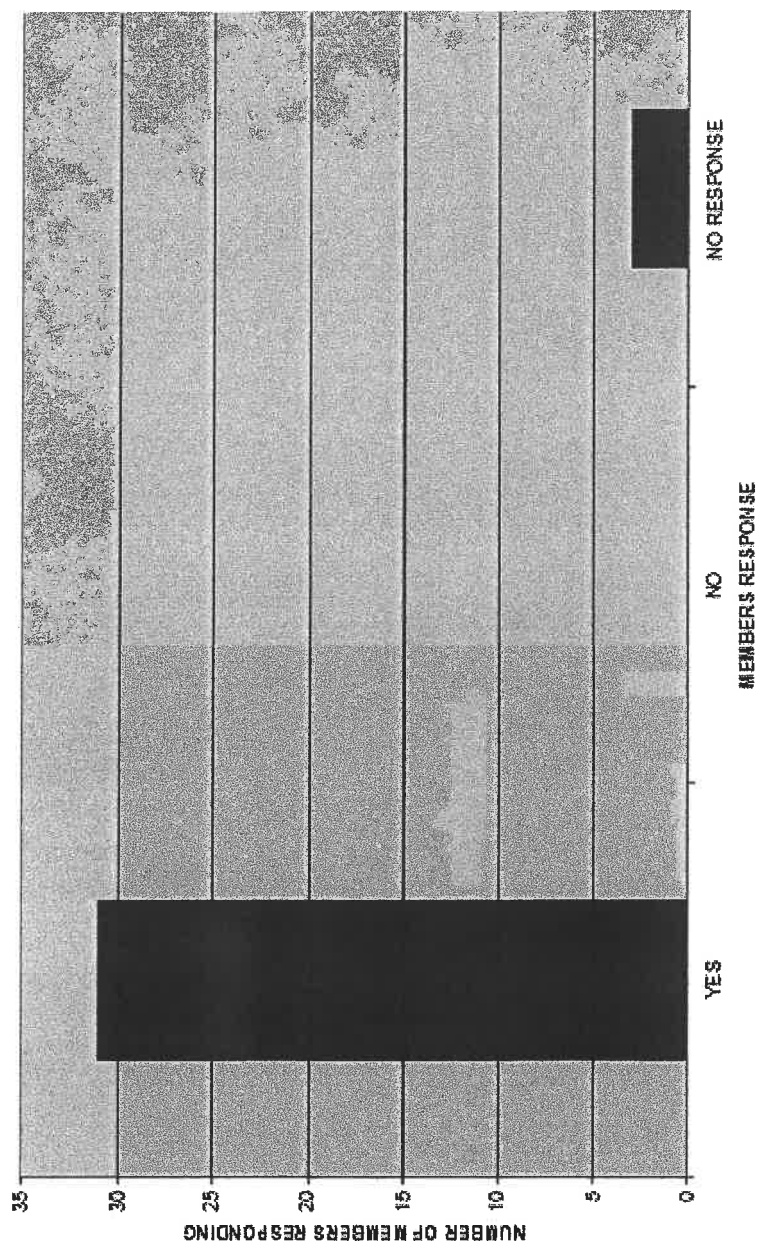
QUESTION #28 HAS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS VOTING CHANGED AS A RESULT OF THE
VOTER MOBILIZATION DRIVE?



QUESTION #29 DURING THE RALLY AT CORINTHIAN MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH DID
YOU FEEL THAT THE COMMITMENTS MADE BY THE ELECTED OFFICIALS WERE
MEANINGFUL



QUESTION #30 DO THE OFFICIAL CHURCH AUTHORITIES SUPPORT VOTING



APPENDIX B

TABLES

TABLE 1
US CENSUS BUREAU
2000 CENSUS
COLUMBUS, OHIO

DP-1: Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000

Data Set: Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data

Geographic Area: Columbus city

Ohio

NOTE: For information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, definitions, and count corrections see

<http://factfinder.census.gov/home/en/datanotes/expsfl1u.htm>.

Subject	Number	Percent
Total population	711,470	100
SEX AND AGE		
Male	345,878	48.6
Female	365,592	51.4
Under 5 years	53,347	7.5
5 to 9 years	50,119	7
10 to 14 years	44,291	6.2
15 to 19 years	48,663	6.8
20 to 24 years	74,938	10.5
25 to 34 years	139,434	19.6
35 to 44 years	110,351	15.5
45 to 54 years	81,256	11.4
55 to 59 years	25,724	3.6
60 to 64 years	20,316	2.9
65 to 74 years	33,793	4.7
75 to 84 years	21,705	3.1
85 years and over	7,533	1.1
Median age (years)	30.6	(X)
18 years and over	539,602	75.8
Male	258,465	36.3
Female	281,137	39.5
21 years and over	500,213	70.3
62 years and over	74,757	10.5
65 years and over	63,031	8.9
Male	24,054	3.4
Female	38,977	5.5
RACE		
One race	692,641	97.4

White	483,332	67.9
Black or African American	174,065	24.5
American Indian and Alaska Native	2,090	0.3
Asian	24,495	3.4
Asian Indian	6,425	0.9

Subject	Number	Percent
Chinese	5,746	0.8
Filipino	1,271	0.2
Japanese	1,955	0.3
Korean	2,549	0.4
Vietnamese	1,827	0.3
Other Asian 1	4,722	0.7
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	367	0.1
Native Hawaiian	72	0
Guamanian or Chamorro	63	0
Samoan	112	0
Other Pacific Islander 2	120	0
Some other race	8,292	1.2
Two or more races	18,829	2.6

Race alone or in combination with one or more other races 3

White	496,425	69.8
Black or African American	185,173	26
American Indian and Alaska Native	6,914	1
Asian	28,040	3.9
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	953	0.1
Some other race	14,574	2

HISPANIC OR LATINO AND RACE

Total population	711,470	100
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	17,471	2.5
Mexican	8,686	1.2
Puerto Rican	2,790	0.4
Cuban	627	0.1
Other Hispanic or Latino	5,368	0.8
Not Hispanic or Latino	693,999	97.5
White alone	475,897	66.9

RELATIONSHIP

Total population	711,470	100
In households	693,811	97.5
Householder	301,534	42.4
Spouse	108,708	15.3
Child	188,488	26.5
Own child under 18 years	153,255	21.5
Other relatives	34,518	4.9
Under 18 years	14,315	2
Nonrelatives	60,563	8.5
Unmarried partner	21,255	3

In group quarters	17,659	2.5
Institutionalized population	5,412	0.8
Noninstitutionalized population	12,247	1.7

HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE

Subject	Number	Percent
Total households	301,534	100
Family households (families)	165,380	54.8
With own children under 18 years	84,512	28
Married-couple family	108,708	36.1
With own children under 18 years	49,808	16.5
Female householder, no husband present	43,780	14.5
With own children under 18 years	28,083	9.3
Nonfamily households	136,154	45.2
Householder living alone	102,900	34.1
Householder 65 years and over	21,225	7
Households with individuals under 18 years	93,322	30.9
Households with individuals 65 years and over	46,441	15.4
Average household size	2.3	(X)
Average family size	3.01	(X)

HOUSING OCCUPANCY

Total housing units	327,175	100
Occupied housing units	301,534	92.2
Vacant housing units	25,641	7.8
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	1,113	0.3
Homeowner vacancy rate (percent)	2	(X)
Rental vacancy rate (percent)	8.3	(X)

HOUSING TENURE

Occupied housing units	301,534	100
Owner-occupied housing units	148,004	49.1
Renter-occupied housing units	153,530	50.9
Average household size of owner-occupied unit	2.48	(X)
Average household size of renter-occupied unit	2.13	(X)

(X) Not applicable

1 Other Asian alone, or two or more Asian categories.

2 Other Pacific Islander alone, or two or more Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander categories.

3 In combination with one or more other races listed. The six numbers may add to more than the total population and the six percentages may add to more than 100 percent because individuals may report more than one race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1, Matrices P1, P3, P4, P8, P9, P12, P13, P17, P18, P19, P20, P23, P27, P28, P33, PCT5, PCT8, PCT11, PCT15, H1, H3, H4, H5, H11, and H12.

Table 2
Franklin County Board of Elections 2000 Election Results <http://vote.franklincountyohio.gov/boe/assets/pdf/2000/General/Results/FranklinCountyGen2000.xls>

PRECINCT NAME	POLLING LOCATION	ADDRESS	CITY	STATE	ZIP	REGISTRE RED VOTERS	VOTES CAST	PERCENT VOTED
BEXLEY 1-A	MARYLAND AVENUE SCHOOL	2754 MARYLAND AVE	COLUMBU S	OH	43209			
BEXLEY 1-B	JEFFREY MANSION	165 N PARKVIEW AVE	COLUMBU S	OH	43209	634	381	60.09463722
BEXLEY 1-C	JEFFREY MANSION	165 N PARKVIEW AVE	COLUMBU S	OH	43209	856	582	67.99065421
BEXLEY 2-A	BEXLEY HIGH SCHOOL	326 S CASSINGHAM RD	COLUMBU S	OH	43209	1,001	660	65.93406593
BEXLEY 2-B	BEXLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH	2657 E BROAD ST	COLUMBU S	OH	43209	569	386	67.83831283
BEXLEY 2-C	BEXLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH	2657 E BROAD ST	COLUMBU S	OH	43209	657	463	70.4718417
BEXLEY 3-A	MONTROSE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	2555 E MAIN ST	COLUMBU S	OH	43209	947	667	70.43294615
BEXLEY 3-B	MONTROSE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	2555 E MAIN ST	COLUMBU S	OH	43209	753	533	70.78353254
BEXLEY 3-C	BEXLEY HIGH SCHOOL	326 S CASSINGHAM RD	COLUMBU S	OH	43209	721	473	65.60332871
BEXLEY 4-A	CAMPUS CENTER SCHNEIDER ROOM	745 PLEASANT RIDGE AVE	COLUMBU S	OH	43209	744	398	53.49462366
BEXLEY 4-B	BEXLEY HIGH SCHOOL	326 S CASSINGHAM RD	COLUMBU S	OH	43209	336	236	70.23809524
BEXLEY 4-C	CAMPUS CENTER SCHNEIDER ROOM	745 PLEASANT RIDGE AVE	COLUMBU S	OH	43209	958	576	60.12526096
	TOTAL REGISTERED BEXLEY					8,176		
COLS 07-F	SAWYER RECREATION CENTER	1056 ATCHESON ST	COLUMBU S	OH	43203			
COLS 06-D	ST PHILIPS EPISCOPAL CHURCH	166 WOODLAND AVE	COLUMBU S	OH	43203	970	442	45.56701031
COLS 06-E	ST PHILIPS EPISCOPAL CHURCH	166 WOODLAND AVE	COLUMBU S	OH	43203	828	444	53.62318841
COLS 07-A	UNITED HOUSE OF PRAYER MT VERNON AVE OUTREACH CENTER	1731 GREENWAY AVE	COLUMBU S	OH	43203	728	325	44.64285714
COLS 07-B	SAWYER RECREATION CENTER	1147 MT VERNON AVE	COLUMBU S	OH	43203	1,074	517	48.13780261
COLS 07-C	SAWYER RECREATION CENTER	1056 ATCHESON ST	COLUMBU S	OH	43203	833	360	43.21728601
COLS 07-E	SAWYER TOWERS	525 SAWYER BLVD	COLUMBU S	OH	43203	1,238	587	47.41518578
	TOTAL REGISTERED -03					5,671		

Table 3
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Reports, Series CENSR-4,
Demographic Trends in the 20th Century, Table 15 Hobbs and Stoops

Subject	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE						
Total households	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Family households	89.4	84.9	80.3	73.2	70.2	68.1
Nonfamily households	10.6	15.1	19.7	26.8	29.8	31.9
1 member	9.5	13.3	17.6	22.7	24.6	25.8
2 or more members	1.1	1.7	2.1	4.1	5.3	6.1
FAMILY TYPE BY PRESENCE OF OWN CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS						
Total families	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No own children under 18 years	48.1	43.1	45.1	48.8	52.1	51.8
With own children under 18 years	51.9	56.9	54.9	51.2	47.9	48.2
Under 6 years only	(NA)	13.9	12.7	12.4	12.2	11.2
Under 6 years and 6 to 17 years	(NA)	16.9	13.4	9.7	9.9	9.6
6 to 17 years only	(NA)	26.1	28.7	29.0	25.7	27.4
Married-couple families						
No own children under 18 years	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
With own children under 18 years	44.9	40.7	44.3	49.8	53.7	54.4
Under 6 years only	55.1	59.3	55.7	50.2	46.3	45.6
Under 6 years and 6 to 17 years	(NA)	15.1	13.5	12.8	12.3	10.8
6 to 17 years only	(NA)	18.1	13.9	10.0	10.1	9.8
	(NA)	26.1	28.3	27.3	23.9	25.0
Female householder, no husband present						
No own children under 18 years	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
With own children under 18 years	66.0	54.9	45.4	39.8	43.5	41.4
Under 6 years only	34.0	45.1	54.6	60.2	56.5	58.6
Under 6 years and 6 to 17 years	(NA)	6.4	8.9	11.3	11.9	11.9
6 to 17 years only	(NA)	10.2	11.8	9.7	10.2	9.9
	(NA)	28.5	33.9	39.3	34.4	36.9

TABLE 4

Monthly Labor Review, Volume 125, Number 5, May 2002, pages 15-28,
A century of change: the U.S. labor force, 1950-2050, Mitra Toossi

Labor Force Change, 1950-2050

Table 1. Civilian labor force by sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin, 1950, 2000, and projected, 2050

[Numbers in thousands]

Group	Level (in thousands)			Change		Percent change		Percent distribution		Annual growth rate (percent)	
	1950	2000	2050	1950-2000	2000-50	1950-2000	2000-50	1950	2000	1950-2000	2000-50
Total, 16 years and older	62,208	140,863	191,825	78,655	50,961	126.4	36.2	100.0	100.0	1.6	0.6
Men	43,819	75,247	100,280	31,428	25,033	71.7	33.3	70.4	53.4	1.1	.6
Women	18,389	65,616	91,545	47,227	25,928	256.8	39.5	29.6	46.6	2.6	.7
16 to 24	11,522	22,715	31,317	11,193	8,602	97.1	37.9	18.5	16.1	1.4	.6
25 to 54	40,017	99,974	124,443	59,957	24,469	149.8	24.5	64.3	71.0	1.8	.4
55 and older	10,669	18,175	36,065	7,506	17,891	70.3	98.4	17.2	12.9	1.1	1.4
White	—	117,574	143,770	—	26,196	—	22.3	—	83.5	—	.4
Black	—	16,603	27,094	—	10,491	—	63.2	—	11.8	—	1.0
Asian and other ¹	—	6,687	20,960	—	14,274	—	213.5	—	4.7	—	2.3
Hispanic origin	—	15,368	45,426	—	30,058	—	195.6	—	10.9	—	2.2
Other than Hispanic origin	—	125,495	146,399	—	20,903	—	16.7	—	89.1	—	.3
White non-Hispanic	—	102,963	102,506	—	(457)	—	-.4	—	73.1	—	.0

¹ The "Asian and other" group includes (1) Asians and Pacific Islanders made directly, not by subtraction.

and (2) American Indians and Alaska Natives. The historical data are derived by subtracting "black" and "white" from the total; projections are

Note: Dash indicates data not available.

Table 5

	White	Black or African American	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic or Latino
Average persons per household	2.34	2.5	2.52	2.61	3.04
Total households	340,874	74,974	1,143	12,053	7,201
Family Household	59.5%	62.3%	57.7%	63.2%	64.0%
• Married	46.5%	27.1%	32.9%	52.7%	39.4%
• Couple Families					
• Female headed Families	9.5%	29.6%	17.1%	6.1%	12.9%
Non-family households	40.5%	27.7%	42.3%	36.8%	36.0%
• Persons living alone	31.0%	31.6%	29.7%	26.4%	21.3%

United Way of Central Ohio 2003 Racial Disparities Report, Page 2-12, Table 2-5: Household Characteristics

APPENDIX C

CONTEXT ASSOCIATES AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATES MATERIALS

SAMPLE OF INITIAL LETTER TO CONTEXT ASSOCIATES

May 11, 2006

RE: Thursday, May 25, 2006, Meeting of Context Associates

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your willingness to work with me in the development of a doctoral ministry project. You have expressed an interest in becoming one of the Context Associates on my team. As a stakeholder within the community in which you live and/or work you have both a service oriented nature and a driving desire to change the direction our community appears to be taking. The doctoral project we will be working on is a living entity, subject to evolution, growth, and direct community implementation through your direct input. The focus of my ministerial research is: Doctoral Ministry Program – An Advocacy Program for Youth. Through the collaboration of our group, we will develop a synergistic approach to identify and assist the constituents of the community in which we live and work.

I realize your time is valuable. However, I believe that the evolution of this project will be an exciting and fulfilling venture. Also, the completion of this enterprise will result in having a positive and constructive impact upon the identified constituencies that we are currently serving. I am bringing you in at the very beginning stages of this undertaking so that you and others can work with me as a team.

A Contextual Associate is a member of a team chosen to assist in planning and implementing a ministry model within the local context (environment) of the church. Associates are drawn from the people expected to benefit from the program. For example, laity in a local church could be Context Associates for a parish pastor; Students and Education Professionals within the local community would be Context Associates for a school administrator; Employees who work with members of the community in human services/service oriented positions would be considered as Context Associates for politicians defining community human resource needs and programs. For your perusal, I have enclosed a more thorough, but brief description of Context Associates.

A meeting date of Thursday, May 25 has been selected. The meeting should last for approximately 1.5 hours from 6:15 PM – 7:45 PM at Asbury North United Methodist Church, 1586 Clifton Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43203. Please review the team meeting agenda and the brief description of the Context Associates.

Thank you for your interest and participation. I am extremely eager at the prospect of working with you on a sector of our community that has a dire need to be examined and addressed.

Sincerely,

Gregory H. Herndon, Senior Pastor

Enclosures (2)

07132006 Meeting Minutes

Meeting began at 6:00 PM

In Attendance:

Derek Collins	Don Conley
Pastor Greg Herndon	Carolyn
Vanessa Tolliver	Elizabeth Willis

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Minutes for the July 6, 2006 meeting were requested to be set aside until the next meeting due to numerous errors.

Report on Progress on Ministerial Program

Pastor Greg updated the committee on his progress within the Ministerial Program. A conference with his Mentor Group is scheduled for July 17 – 19. A critical analysis of the work performed by the Pastor will be conducted during this conference.

Needs Assessment Draft

A draft of the Community Needs Assessment was provided to the group. The group reviewed the draft and made necessary revisions.

- The Community Needs Assessment will be revised and reformatted to incorporate the group's revisions.
- Carolyn volunteered to coordinate the interview process for the assessment.
- Pastor Herndon volunteered to write a letter to the community and to inform the Church Council of the Needs Assessment Interview.
- Vanessa Tolliver volunteered to collect addresses of the homes to be interviewed.

Update Regarding Programs Provided in the Community

Derek Collins reported on the need to perform a partnership with the hospitals in the community. Children's Hospital may be a valuable asset to the community in order to deal with anger management issues that plaque some of the youth in the community. A meeting with the new coordinator of the hospital's wellness program, Cindi Solomon, will be held with the group at a later date. The group also suggested that we meet with administrators of OSU East.

The Columbus Police Department, Precinct 6 Liaison, Officer Jason Jackson, has not been conducted yet. No direct contact has been made with Officer Jackson, only voice mail.

An appraisal of other community providers as well as scheduled meetings with providers is imperative as part of the needs assessment of the community.

Wrap Up

Proposed Scheduling Changes:

- The Committee will not meet again until Thursday September 7, 2006. However, the committee will be updated on the work performed by the Pastor and various group members during this time period.
- Once the meetings start up again we will no longer meet on the last Thursday of every month.

Next Meeting Thursday, September 7, 2006 6:00 PM at Asbury North

Respectfully Submitted,



July 25, 2006

CONTEXT ASSOCIATES

BIOS

The Context Associates are resourceful members of the greater Columbus community. There are eight members, including the Pastor who serves as Chair of the Context Associates Committee. The group's background exemplifies diversity and expertise and all have various ties to the context area. The group consists of the following:

Derek F. Collins: 20-year employee with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mineral Resources Management as a Geologist III. He works as a Mediator for the Columbus, Ohio City Attorney's Office. Derek is a co-partner in a mediation service located in Columbus, Ohio that specializes in settling disputes, between high school students, within the Columbus Public School System. Derek is a graduate of Ohio University in Athens, Ohio.

Donald W. Conley: 15 year employee with the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Local 11 AFL-CIO where he has served as Associate General Counsel, Acting Associate Director, and Operations Director. Prior to employment with OCSEA, Local 11 Don served as an Assistant Attorney General, Senior Trial Attorney, and Chief of the Civil Rights Section. Don is a graduate of East High School located within the context area, The Ohio State University, and Case Western Reserve University, School of Law.

Carolyn J. : Member of Asbury North United Methodist Church. Carolyn has

approximately 25 years experience as an administrator and employed with the Ohio Department of Education, Xerox Education Center, a UMC Church Secretary, a brokerage firm, a mutual fund company, and 17 years experience in banking. Carolyn is the Treasurer of Asbury North .

Department of Education, Xerox Education Center, a UMC Church Secretary, a brokerage firm, a mutual fund company, and 17 years experience in banking. Carolyn is the Treasurer of Asbury North UMC. Sister is a graduate of Ohio Dominican College and currently employed as a Commercial Account Coordinator at the Fifth Third Bank. Carolyn is the wife of Reverend Michael D. .

John A. Jones: Member of Asbury North United Methodist Church. John is currently the Senior Merchandising Manager of Elmer's Products. He has held Managerial Positions with Gibson Greetings, Carlton Cards, Hallmark Cards and International Harvester. John is a graduate of Indiana University, is currently the Chairperson of the Church Council, Lay Speaker, and serves on numerous committees of Asbury North.

Loyce C. Scott: Has a Masters in Social Work from The Ohio State University. She is a former employee of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources where she served as a manager within the Division of Litter and Recycling. She works with Isabelle Ridgeway Nursing Home that is located within the context area of Asbury North United Methodist Church.

Vanessa Tolliver: Member of Asbury North United Methodist Church serves on the Outreach Committee and is the Secretary of the Context Associates Committee.

Vanessa is a 25-year employee with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources where she works as a Geologist III. Vanessa is a graduate of The Ohio State University.

Elizabeth A. Willis: 25-year employee with the Franklin County Department of Children Services. Elizabeth has served in the capacity of Social Worker and Case Worker advocating for children within Franklin County. Many of Elizabeth's clients live within the context area of Asbury North UMC. Her husband Kenneth works as a Middle School Teacher within the Columbus Public School System near the periphery of the context area. Elizabeth is a graduate of The Ohio State University.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATES

Dr. Ronald L. Glenn

PhD from University of Pittsburgh (PA)

Senior Pastor of Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church, Dayton, Ohio

Dr. Devin Dudley

D.Min. from Ashland Theological Seminary (OH)

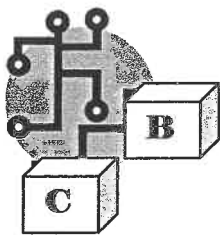
Senior Pastor of the Church at North Pointe, Columbus, Ohio

Professor at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio

Dr. Rhonda Evans

JD from Concord University (CA)

Consultant, Columbus, Ohio



Community Builders Meeting Agenda

Thursday, November 9, 2006

5:02 PM to 6:02 PM

Asbury North United Methodist Church

1586 Clifton Avenue

Columbus, Ohio 43203

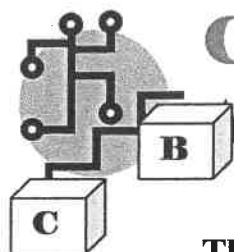
Facilitator:
Pastor Herndon

Note taker:
Vanessa Tolliver

----- Agenda Topics -----

Minutes From Last Meeting	Tolliver	5 Min
Progress of Ministerial Paper To Date	Pastor Greg	15 Mi
Where we Should Go From Here	Pastor Herndon	15 Mi
Synopsis of Faith Vote Initiative	Group Participants	15 Mi
Recommendations and Wrap Up	Group	8 min
Schedule for Next Meeting	Group	2 Min

Other Information



Community Builders Meeting

Agenda

Thursday, November 9, 2006

5:02 PM to 6:02 PM

Asbury North United Methodist Church

1586 Clifton Avenue

Columbus, Ohio 43203

Facilitator:

**Pastor
Herndon**

Note taker:

Vanessa Tolliver

----- Agenda Topics -----

Minutes From Last Meeting

Tolliver

5 Min

Discussion:

Conclusions:

Action items:

**Person
responsible:**

Deadline:

Progress of Ministerial Paper To Date		Pastor Greg	15 Mi
Discussion:			
Conclusions:			
Action items:		Person responsible:	Deadline:

Where we Should Go From Here		Pastor Herndon	15 Mi
Discussion:			
Conclusions:			
Action items:	Person responsible:	Deadline:	

Synopsis of Faith Vote Initiative		Group Participants	15 Mi
Discussion:			
Conclusions:			
Action items:	Person responsible:	Deadline:	

Recommendations and Wrap Up			Group	8 min
Discussion:				
Conclusions:				
Action items:		Person responsible:	Deadline:	

Schedule for Next Meeting		Group	2 Min
Discussion:			
Conclusions:			
Action items:	Person responsible:	Deadline:	

Other Information

APPENDIX D

Industrial Areas Foundation Materials

FaithVote Columbus 2006

The Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), a national expert in building non-partisan community organizations and practicing democratic action, is working with leaders of religious congregations and labor unions throughout Ohio to develop an effective voter mobilization strategy that will get out the vote for key social and economic justice issues in urban areas.

This get-out-the-vote campaign will be:

- *Non-partisan*
- *Focused on promoting and preserving the right to vote*
- *Centered in Columbus, Dayton, East Cleveland, and Lorain in 2006*

The IAF strategy for ensuring maximum voter participation involves:

- Targeting low-performing precincts in urban areas
- Building citizen leadership
- Developing an urban agenda and bringing it to the center of debate in the gubernatorial race.
- Demanding recognition and accountability from the next Governor of Ohio

2006 Timeline:

- **September 7, 7 pm, St. Paul AME Church (628 E. Long St.):** Convention to identify issues for a Columbus city-wide agenda.
- **September 21, 7 pm, New Life UMC (25 W. 5th Ave):** Orientation and Training for allied congregations.
- **September 28, 7 pm (location TBA):** Ratification of Columbus issue agenda.
- **October 22, 6 pm, Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church (3161 E 5th Ave)**
 - Both gubernatorial candidates are asked to commit to the issue agenda
 - 500-1000 members of congregations and unions are in attendance
 - 300 + volunteers are recruited for voter mobilization efforts
- **Oct. 23-Nov. 6:** 300+ volunteers participate in phone banks and neighborhood walks targeting non-habitual voters in 50 precincts. Each volunteer takes responsibility for turning out 20 new voters.

- **Nov. 7:** 300+ volunteers out on Election Day running a GOTV campaign.

Contact: Ari Lipman (*Columbus Organizer*): 617-852-6405, lipman@fas.harvard.edu
Jonathan Lange (*LAF National Staff*): 443-745-3402, langeiaf@hotmail.com

**LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATING WITHIN THE FIRST FAITH
VOTE COLUMBUS INITIATIVE
(REPETITION REFERENCES NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS FROM EACH INSTITUTION)**

[illegible]

QUESTIONS ASKED OF GUBANATORIAL, SENATE AND SECRETARY OF STATE CANDIDATES

Pensions:

There are hundreds of thousands of government workers in Ohio that are depending on the six “defined benefit” pension plans administered in the State of Ohio. If elected will you do all in your power to protect these plans from privatization, including using your veto power to do so?

Jobs:

- a. If elected will you do all in your power to ensure that Ohio workers and businesses get preference in the awarding of state contracts?
- b. Will you also demand that any state funds used to attract new jobs to Ohio will only be used for “living wage” jobs?

Education:

The funding system for Ohio public schools has been found unconstitutional by the courts. Will you pledge that by the end of your first term you will be able to report that Ohio’s public schools are constitutionally funded and that public schools will have the resources they need to provide a quality education?

Health Care:

Will you pledge to provide affordable health care for all Ohioans? Will you also pledge to protect Medicaid recipients and restore mental health parity for Ohioans?

Senatorial candidates:

Medicaid funding is a large financial burden on the state. As a Senator will you do all in your power to increase federal funding to Ohio for Medicaid? And will you also work with the new Governor to decrease the ranks of the uninsured in Ohio?

Will you do all in your power to compel companies to honor the pension commitments made to their employees and not cancel their pension plans?

Secretary of State:


As Secretary of State will you do all in your power to facilitate the ability of qualified citizens to vote and fight any attempts at voter suppression?

APPENDIX E

ASBURY NORTH CONGREGATION PARTICIPATION IN SURVEY

INITIAL LETTER TO THIRTY-THREE PARTICIPANTS REQUESTING PARTICIPATION IN QUESTIONNAIRE

June 7, 2007



I am asking you to take a half hour or so out of your busy schedule to respond to the enclosed questionnaire regarding our partnership with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) Faith Vote Columbus Campaign which occurred last summer and fall.

If you remember, our participation began in August of 2006 with Bishop Joseph Sprague delivering a sermon during our Sunday Morning Worship Service followed by a meeting in the Heritage Hall to determine the community concerns we would like to see the next elected officials of the State of Ohio to address. This was the beginning of our Church's involvement in the non-partisan Faith Vote Columbus Campaign. The campaign continued through Election Day with a highlight at the Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church in which Gubernatorial Candidates, US Senate Candidates and Secretary of State Candidates attended to answer questions we developed regarding our communities.

I am attempting to determine the degree of participation of the Asbury North Congregation in partnership with the Industrial Areas Foundation Faith Vote Columbus (Get-Out-The-Vote Campaign) during 2006. I am also attempting to determine if our involvement in this non-partisan campaign had meaning for those members who participated.

Enclosed is a 30 (thirty)-question questionnaire consisting of yes/no questions and a few general questions on demographics and personal history. If you feel yes /no responses are insufficient to answer the questions there are additional lines for your comments.

Any assistance that you are able to give in this regard is both helpful and appreciated. Thank you in advance for your time, patience and support of this project.

Your Humble Servant in Christ,

Reverend Gregory H. Herndon,
Pastor

QUESTIONNAIRE MAILED OUT TO THIRTY-THREE PARTICIPANTS

1. How long have you been a member of Asbury North UMC?

2. How long have you been a registered voter?

- ☐ Less than 5 years
- ☐ 5 – 10 years
- ☐ 10 – 15 years
- ☐ 15 – 20 years
- ☐ 20 – 25 years
- ☐ 25 – 30 years
- ☐ 30 – 35 years
- ☐ 35 – 40 years
- ☐ 40+ years

3. Why do you vote?

- ☐ Concern about the condition of your community?
- ☐ Concern about the politicians currently in office?
- ☐ Concern regarding political representation within your community?
- ☐ All of the above
- ☐ Other _____

4. Does it matter to God whether you vote or not?

- ☐ YES ☐ NO

5. Does your understanding of the scriptures encourage you to vote?

☐ YES ☐ NO

6. Have sermons impacted your interest in voting?

☐ YES ☐ NO

7. Do you see God in the voting process?

☐ YES ☐ NO

8. Do you feel it is your civic duty under God to vote?

☐ YES ☐ NO

9. Have you ever participated in a non-partisan civic initiative prior to the IAF (Industrial Areas Foundation) Faith Vote Columbus Voter Mobilization Drive?

☐ YES ☐ NO

10. Have you ever participated in a partisan political campaign prior to the IAF Faith Vote Columbus Voter Mobilization Drive?

☐ YES

☐ NO

11. Do you feel that the non-partisan process works better than working on a political campaign and telling people who to vote for?

☐ YES

☐ NO

12. Please check each Faith Vote Columbus activity that you participated in.

August 13, 2006, at Asbury North UMC: Congregation meets in Heritage Hall to identify community concerns the next Governor of Ohio should address.

☐ YES

☐ NO

September 7, 2006, at St. Paul AME: Convention of participants (churches, synagogues, unions, neighborhood organizations) to identify community concerns raised by their members and select the participants top five concerns.

☐ YES

☐ NO

September 21, 2006, at New Life UMC: Orientation and Training for allied congregations and organizations.

☐ YES

☐ NO

September 28, 2006, at Asbury North UMC: Ratification of concerns and modification of agenda to open the invitation to the US Senate and Secretary of State Candidates.

☐ YES

☐ NO

October 22, 2006, at Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church: Meetings with political candidates to ask them how they will address various concerns of the community.

☐ YES

☐ NO

October 23 – November 6, 2006, at Woodland Christian Church and Asbury North UMC operation of phone banks and Neighborhood Walks to encourage community to get out and vote.

☐ YES ☐ NO

November 7, 2006, Woodland Christian Church: Leafleting Polls, Phone Banks, Providing Transportation to Polls for Voters and answer questions regarding the voter's Poll location.

☐ YES ☐ NO

13. What age group do you fall within?

☐ 18-29 ☐ 30-49 ☐ 50-69 ☐ 70-89 ☐ 90+

14. Can voting change the social conditions of a community?

☐ YES ☐ NO

15. Are you a ☐ Male ☐ Female

16. What is your zip code? _____

17. Is voter turnout important to you?

☐ YES ☐ NO

18. Should the church be involved in encouraging people to vote?

☐ YES ☐ NO

19. Is it your moral duty to vote?

☐ YES ☐ NO

20. What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ Some High School
☐ High School
☐ High School Graduate
☐ Some College
☐ College Graduate
☐ Some Post Graduate Work
☐ Post Graduate Degree

21. Which event that you participated in had the most impact on you?

August 13, 2006, at Asbury North UMC: Congregation meets in Heritage Hall to identify community concerns the next Governor of Ohio should address.

☐ YES ☐ NO

September 7, 2006, at St. Paul AME: Convention of participants (churches, synagogues, unions, neighborhood organizations) to identify the concerns raised by their members and select the top four concerns.

☐ YES ☐ NO

September 21, 2006, at New Life UMC: Orientation and Training for allied congregations and organizations.

☐ YES ☐ NO

September 28, 2006, at Asbury North UMC: Ratification of concerns and modification of agenda to open the invitation to the US Senate and Secretary of State Candidates.

☐ YES ☐ NO

October 22, 2006, at Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church: Meetings with political candidates to ask them how they will address various concerns of the community.

☐ YES ☐ NO

October 23 – November 6, 2006, at Woodland Christian Church and Asbury North UMC operation of phone banks and Neighborhood Walks to encourage community to get out and vote.

☐ YES ☐ NO

November 7, 2006, Woodland Christian Church: Leafleting Polls, Phone Banks, Providing Transportation to Polls for Voters and answer questions regarding the voter's Poll location.

☐ YES ☐ NO

Why did the selected event have an impact on you? _____

22. Which of the five concerns voted on by the IAF Faith Vote participants at St. Paul AME had the most significant impact on you?

Pensions

☐ YES ☐ NO

Jobs

☐ YES ☐ NO

Education

☐ YES ☐ NO

Health Care

☐ YES ☐ NO

Property Tax Relief for Senior Citizens

☐ YES ☐ NO

23. Did you achieve a personal benefit because of your participation in the voter mobilization process?

☐ YES ☐ NO

24. Did you sense the presence of God as you participated in the Voting Mobilization effort?

☐ YES ☐ NO

25. Where were you born? _____

26. How long have you been a resident in central Ohio?

27. Prior to the IAF Voter Mobilization Campaign did you think the voting process was effective?

☐ YES ☐ NO

28. Has your attitude towards voting changed as a result of the voter mobilization drive?

☐ YES ☐ NO

29. During the rally at Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church did you feel that the commitments made by the elected officials were meaningful?

☐ YES ☐ NO

30. Do the official church authorities support voting?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Interview Questions

I. Did the church members recognize a moral obligation to vote?

II. Were the parishioners motivated by the church initiative to engage in a community voter mobilization drive?

III. What was it about the community organizing effort that influenced their involvement in the voter motivation project?

APPENDIX F

Memoir

MEMOIR OF EXPERIENCES WITH FAITH VOTE COLUMBUS

The IAF project began for me when a representative, Ari Lipman, attended one of our Sunday Worship Services in the summer of 2006. After the service, one of our church seniors introduced me to Ari. That is when I found out Ari had come to Ohio from Boston to assist in mobilizing the vote in Ohio. The IAF project was a summer job for Ari as he was in the process of completing either his masters or doctorate degree in Theology from Harvard University. Ari was deployed to Ohio for the summer and was redeployed in the fall to finalize our activities.

I was somewhat surprised that many of the seniors in attendance at our church were ready and willing to participate in any type of activity to reinforce voter mobilization in our church's community. A large percentage of our church's population were septuagenarians or greater. I would have assumed that anyone over 70 would not have the energy, desire, or need to participate in a voter mobilization drive. However, I hadn't taken several factors into consideration when I made this assumption.

I discovered with age comes wisdom. Most of our congregation lived through the Civil Rights Movement and fought for the right to vote. A large number of our congregation was from southern states, which would have strongly enforced the "Jim Crow Laws" during the 1950's and 1960's. Many in our congregation had first hand experience with racism in our country. Many in our congregation realized and deeply valued the number of lives that had been lost because of Civil Rights Movement. The majority of our congregation saw a spiritual connection with God when it came to exercising their right to vote. Initially, I couldn't see what God had to do with voting -- but it isn't so much about voting as much as it is about taking care of our fellow humans. It is similar to us being stewards of the earth. I can understand that concept with no

problem, having a moral responsibility to take care of all of God's creatures as well as His planet. I never looked at a political process as being connected to God, but in a sense that just shows my spiritual immaturity – for are not all things connected to God?

Interesting enough it is a two-fold process for me to see a connection to God and voting. First, you have to believe you have a moral obligation to vote. If voting is defined by morality then you also have a moral obligation to determine which candidates have the interest of the people, the everyday citizen, both within their campaign promises and displayed in their actions at heart. I believe someone with a stronger maturity in his or her religion and faith would have seen this connection up front. A large percentage of the congregation that participated in the IAF Faith Vote Columbus voter mobilization drive have been members of Asbury for decades and also have had a long time to develop a personal relationship with God. Also, since the majority of the members are black older than fifty years, and have first hand experience with the Civil Rights Movement, alienation from voting, the Voting Rights Act, and come from southern states voting has a special meaning to those who were once disenfranchised.

Asbury North First Congregational Faith Vote Meeting

On Sunday, August 13, 2006, approximately 75-80 members of the congregation of Asbury North United Methodist Church met after worship services in the Heritage Hall to identify areas of concern we would like the next Governor of the State of Ohio address. It was a most interesting event – the turn out was much better than I anticipated and I was completely amazed at the number of people who opted to stay and participate in the exercise. I think one of the reasons they stayed was because of the push from the pulpit and the reinforcement from church seniors of the importance of the exercise. Pastor

constantly addressed in numerous sermons the ills of society. He talked about black youth getting killed or incarcerated, poverty within the black community, poor education within the community, the lack of universal health coverage, our nation's involvement in the Middle East, our nation's lack of focus, and questioned the reason why a nation as wealthy as ours could exist in such a dichotomy as to perpetuate a class structure. Pastor questioned how could a nation as wealthy as ours have poverty? How can a nation exist in which a very small percentage of the population – something like 5% controls about 90% of the wealth of the nation. Some folk would say that our nation is slowly developing into a proletariat nation, where the majority of our workers do not have any other choice but to sell their labor in order to live. This may or may not be the case today but if we stay headed in the direction we are going this will truly be the case the more people who have to work without retirement pensions or end up paying the cost for catastrophic illnesses because they have no health insurance. If we continue down the course we are headed we will see more and more of our seniors forced to work after retirement to pay for medicine and escalating energy costs. I suppose that I was not the only one in the congregation who recognized a bleak future for our society because the results of the August 13 exercise bore out the fact that many in our congregation identified areas that they wanted the next governor of the state of Ohio to address that mirrored my concerns.

Asbury North identified the following concerns we wanted the Governor to address: 1) Education 2) Jobs/Wages 3) Healthcare and 4) Property Tax Relief for Senior Citizens. The response from the congregation was amazing. There were many who told me or that I overheard telling others after the exercise was completed how good they felt about identifying concerns and engaging in open discussion about their concerns. It was

also amazing the number of people who had common themes of concerns running through their minds but were never afforded either the forum or the ability to address these concerns.

The one thing that the IAF did that I did not necessarily appreciate was the entire organizing plan was not initially rolled out to the masses. We were spoon fed an action or event at a time, without seeing the whole picture of the project until many of us were fully entrenched. In other words unless I just blocked key words out of my mind subliminally, I had no idea that the initial action on August 13 was leading towards a volunteer drive to encourage the neighborhood of our church to get out to vote in November of 2006. How I lost that disconnect I am not sure and I also wonder if I had known the whole plan would it have been too overwhelming for me to want to participate. Not sure, what the participation would have been if this information had not been rolled out to us, but because of the roll out, me and many of our congregation participated in the majority of the activities.

IAF Meeting at St. Paul AME

The second meeting rolled out for our church to attend was the meeting at St. Paul AME on September 7, 2006, at 7:00 PM. There were approximately thirty members from Asbury, the largest number representing any other group/congregation in attendance. There were secular as well as religious organizations in attendance at this meeting with the purpose of us coming together to identify the top four concerns that we could collectively be in agreement. Unions, Churches, neighborhood/civic organizations and Synagogues were in attendance to identify the concerns each of our individual groups identified and what we were willing to vote on as a group to bring forth towards the

gubernatorial candidates. Due to the number of members Asbury had in attendance it was easy for us to weigh our votes to get several of the concerns our congregation requested us to address. Additionally, since we did have a large number in attendance (approximately 1/3 of the total number in attendance) we allied ourselves with several of the public employee Unions present to get our concern regarding property tax relief for senior citizens addressed in exchange for our support on public pensions.

Interesting turn of events – it was reminiscent of times past where I had been an active member in a labor Union. The solidarity was present; we were focused on an end goal of getting areas addressed from our perspective communities. We worked with groups that were similar to us but not like us. We had old folk and young folk present representing our congregation and other groups. Where the majority of the group was black, it was still interesting to see an eclectic group of people with a common interest of improving the needs of our community. There were men and women in attendance wearing business attire or their ‘church – go to meeting clothes’. There were folk there in jeans and t-shirts, dresses, dread locks, straight hair, light skin, dark skin, Jewish and Christian. It was just a wonderful fellowship – a true fellowship and some of us felt what we did we did because it was our obligation as Christians to make sure that the children of God – mankind – had their needs met with the equity and justice which our nation’s creed states are for all citizens.

I felt pride and an internal exuberance as people in attendance went around the room identifying themselves and the group they represented. I can still hear Asbury North United Methodist Church reported again and again and again and the smile never left my lips. As we caucused our church decided to support the issue of pensions for public employees in exchange for the group supporting relief for senior citizens with property

taxes. Everything that our church wanted addressed was a concern adopted by the fellowship of organizations. We took forward our concerns with Healthcare, Education for our Youth, Jobs and Wages and property tax relief for senior citizens. What a wonderful turnout for our church. What a wonderful experience to be working for a cause without the political back biting found in Unions; without the what is in it for me attitude of individuals grasping for power; with a belief and the faith that we were doing a good thing for the people – we were following the true tenets of Christianity.

I was unable to attend the training on September 21, 2006 at New Life UMC. I am not even sure if this was conducted. I was too tired to go to a meeting, Bible Study, other church duties during the week and another meeting that was keeping me out 4 to 5 evenings during the work week was too much for me to handle. So, I took a pass on this meeting.

September 28 Meeting at Asbury North UMC

September 28, 7:00 PM the meeting was held at Asbury North United Methodist Church. This meeting was called for the purpose of ratifying the questions that developed as a result of the concerns identified during the St. Paul AME meeting. I didn't document several meetings between the St. Paul AME meeting and the September 28 meeting at Asbury. Sub-committees met to wordsmith the questions regarding Healthcare, Jobs/Wages, Education, and Pensions. Unfortunately, people from our church volunteered for various committees, but no one from our church volunteered to be on a committee to phrase questions for senior citizen property tax relief. Therefore, since no one signed up we ended up losing this piece.

One important aspect that came out of this meeting was the concept of expanding our questions to include the candidates for the US Senate and the Secretary of State. It

was very important that we include invitations to candidates for the US Senate since a universal healthcare initiative would have to be developed on the Federal level. We included the Secretary of State because of the new law and/or policy that the current Secretary of State, Kenneth Blackwell, implemented, which to a lot of us appeared to disenfranchise poor people and people of color from voting. Therefore, it was important for us to question both candidates for the office of Secretary of State and their proposals to make the voting process equal for all citizens.

Asbury North again represented the largest numbers of participants at the September 28 event. There was pride in us collectively working together to develop and ratify the questions to be asked of the candidates. There was wisdom used to allow us to realize this exercise should not just be centered on gubernatorial issues but we should also take advantage of two other statewide political races and reach out to the candidates for the US Senate and the Secretary of State. Our questions were straightforward; they were designed to be answered with a simple yes or no. They were organized so that we would give each candidate a time frame to respond to the questions. We appointed time keepers, moderators, people who would ask the questions and solicited participation from all of the groups. The day of the event went smoothly because we had organization – and most importantly we had faith that we were doing the right thing; that we were small but collectively we were a force to be reckoned with. This is another one of life's lessons, you have to have faith when you are attempting social change.

So many times many of my friends lose faith in their friends, families, work, God and begin to wallow in the throes of despair and depression when they begin to take stock of their surroundings. We have become desensitized to the injustices in our society and as a result, we have become apathetic. Many of my friends and associates just go through

the motions of work, home, church, sleep, eat – don't think too hard it may make you stop. When real crises hits there is an inability to cope adequately because there is a complete lack of faith. I watched a friend of mine completely disintegrate because of a lie. I wonder if there had been an ability to have faith in his family would the lie have been so devastating. I saw a deep faith in my congregation. I saw a faith that I never saw in a Union meeting. I saw octogenarians and nonagenarians come to the church to work phone banks to talk to strangers to ask them to come out and vote. So, if that isn't faith – faith in voting what is?

The one thing that attracted me and brought me closer to the teachings of Christ is His simplicity of telling and discerning the truth. The truth that our spirits know innately but we refuse to see. The death of a democracy comes from within. I assume this statement is an axiom but appears to bear truth in both our current government and the example of the Roman Republic. People losing interest in the actions of elected politicians; People afraid to speak out in opposition to government actions for fear of retaliation; People refusing to exercise their right to vote; People refusing to make politicians accountable for either their actions or their lack of action; and People unable to fully see the truth behind the motivations of power and greed are all precursors to the demise of a democracy. When people are preoccupied with how they intend to feed their families, pay their debt, get a job, unaffordable health care, care for the elderly and care for the sick an apathy envelopes the society and results in a society that no longer knows how to exist within a hostile system. Hostile to their needs – not necessarily their wants. I believe that is where our government currently lies at a cross road in which we don't have to worry about another government taking over our nation and imposing their government on us – what we really have to worry about is ourselves and our ability to

mobilize effectively to address our national disparities based on gender and race.

Through my church I was able to feel like I was actually affecting change. I didn't get that same feeling with my Union – everything was so convoluted in a quid pro quo environment. However, when you have faith and you work from love of the spirit things just seem to work out. That is how it was with IAF, things just seemed to work out.

October 22, 2006 Meeting at Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church

We went through the initial meetings of the IAF cumulating for a lot of us at the October 22, 2006, meeting at Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church. This meeting was the invitation to the candidates, all of the candidates, to stand before us as a group, to stand before God and answer what their positions were on the areas we identified as key to the survival of our communities.

Prior to the meeting – literally weeks before the meeting the IAF contacted all candidates for the offices of Governor, US Senate, and Secretary-Treasurer. When I say we contacted all candidates, the IAF contacted both the Democratic and Republican candidates for these positions. Unfortunately, the only candidates that chose to come before us were the Democratic candidates. Some of the Republicans didn't even bother to respond to our invitation. We not only reached out verbally and in writing to all the candidates we also sent certified letters to their offices which the IAF received return receipts. Secretary of State Blackwell's campaign initially stated we never contacted his office but we had a certified letter receipt. Blackwell's office then apologized for the confusion but stated they would not be able to attend the event. I do not really recall why Senator DeWine did not come or why the Republican candidate for the Secretary of State, Greg Hartmann did not respond.

The organizations that began working as a group the beginning of the summer were all in attendance. Even though the majority of the audience were black folk, there were many other groups represented too. Two Synagogues in the Columbus area were represented at the October 22 meeting. Neighborhood associations, unions, Baptist churches, Catholic churches, Methodist churches, Christian non-denominational churches were all in attendance with approximately 500 people convening on a cold and rainy night on Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church to listen to what the candidates had to say. I think the candidates were surprised at the turn-out and they answered questions to the crowd's expectations. The candidates even promised to be accountable for their pledges and meet back with Faith Vote Columbus within a year if they were elected to address their progress on the issues we raised as important to us. Again, Asbury North had at least 50 people in attendance at the event. We later thought there might have been as many as 60 people, but publicly we came second in attendance to Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church, the host.

I had a seat on stage, because I participated in the event. This position afforded me the ability to read the audience, to look down on the candidates for their reaction to our questions, to see a lot of the older members of Asbury in attendance who have since passed on. It was a marvelous event to have participated in and myself and many of the congregation of Asbury realized that we had only come so far because of the faith we had because "With God all things are possible."

OCTOBER 23 – NOVEMBER 6, 2006 THE HARD WORK BEGINS

This is the location in which the really die-heart activist start hitting the ground running. The Corinthian Baptist Missionary Church meeting ended with the candidates

leaving for various appointments and the crowd staying to commit to do work to get the vote out in Columbus. The crowd had been worked up by songs of praise and worship prior to the candidates arrival to the forum. A true fellowship of mankind had occurred. We believed in the promises that had been given to us earlier and we were determined regardless to who won the election we would take a non-partisan message to the community informing them of the importance, the necessity to vote in this election. Many of us, including myself had been very, very discouraged in the 2004 Presidential election. We still believed that election had been essentially stolen, that there had been cheating. We also believed that the 2000 election had been similarly stolen in Florida, so many of us had lost complete faith in the voting system of our nation.

Many of our members signed up to work, maybe as many as 30. The IAF with the Faith Vote Initiative gave a lot of us who had been suffering from a lack of faith in the voting process a reason to work hard to get our communities out to vote. Asbury North worked. Those who could not walk worked phone banks. Those who could walk canvassed neighborhoods. Those who were retired worked during the day and evenings. Those of us who worked volunteered our times on evenings and weekends. We walked, we talked, we worked the polling stations by passing out information regarding citizen's right to vote and the need to have identification. We gave out phone numbers of the phone banks and our church. We took phone numbers of citizens to see if they needed a ride to the polls. We even had phone banks on the day of election and when there was a problem people, volunteering for Faith Vote Columbus, would contact headquarters to let us know if we needed to send one of our volunteer attorneys to address a concern at a polling station. We took phone calls to let people know the polling station they were assigned to vote. We took inquiries regarding challenge ballots. We even provided

transportation for those voters who needed a lift to the polls. We worked hard and we worked collectively. The fruit of our labor was the voter turnout as well as the election results. The three candidates who promised to address the issues of Faith Vote Columbus were all elected. Even though come Wednesday morning we were tired and achy from standing out in the cold rain of Tuesday, November 6, 2006, we all woke up with smiles on our faces.

REFLECTIONS ON THE EXPERIENCE

I often reflected on those events of 2006 and what was it that made Asbury North, with a relatively small congregation in comparison to some of the other churches that participated come out in the numbers that we did. After getting to know the congregation and attentively listening to the word preached during Sunday Worship Services and explained during Bible Study I have come up with these conclusions as to why Asbury's participation was high for the number of members in our congregation.

There were black churches, Baptist churches much bigger than ours is, with thousands of congregants that had a very poor turnout with volunteers. One of my friends who attends one of the larger churches in Columbus stated that there was no buy-in from his Pastor or his church seniors into Faith Vote Columbus. Therefore, there was not a push from the pulpit, or time set aside by seniors to address the congregation to inform them of the need to get involved. I also believe that a syndrome occurred which reminded me of the Clarence Thomas senate hearings for the Supreme Court vacancy. I remember following the Clarence Thomas hearing with interest. I began following the situation shortly after Justice Thurgood Marshall stepped down from the bench. Justice Marshall was questioned at a press conference as to whether he thought his replacement should be

black or white. Justice Marshall was seated, I believe in a wheel chair, with a dark suit on and white socks, he looked at the audience and said, "Well my Daddy always told me there wasn't much difference between a black snake and a white snake, they both bite." When black leaders, predominantly men around the nation were questioned as to the qualifications of Clarence Thomas, many would not comment, even though they had to be aware of his judicial record. Essentially, they were saying give the brother a chance. I believe this was the same mentality that many Ohio Baptist ministers took with the Kenneth Blackwell – Ted Strickland gubernatorial race. Even though Faith Vote Columbus was non-partisan, they did not participate whole-heartedly in the process because either they knew Blackwell personally or they wanted to give a brother a chance. This closeted support or out and out support was done even after the questions regarding Ohio's voting irregularities in the 2004 Presidential election were brought to light. Charges of minority and poor disenfranchisement with the draconian measures adopted by the Secretary of State to "prevent voter fraud" was never really addressed by his supporters.

Asbury North encouraged our members to participate in the activity and were constantly reminded to participate from the pulpit almost every Sunday. But not only were there pleas from the seniors and the pulpit for involvement there were also the sermons that talked of the plight of the communities of the poor, the sick, the people of color, the injustices of our society. We talked and prayed for the number of black youth dying from violence in our streets, our teens cried over deaths of young people they knew and our congregation cried for the number of lives that were lost in a war we could not understand. Even though we could not understand the war, several of our members had family in Iraq so we prayed to support our troops. I guess, we were politically aware and

were catalyzed by the church leadership to attempt to effect a change in a non-partisan manner.

I believe I addressed the issue of the church recognizing a moral obligation to vote in the first paragraph of this memoir. I personally am a strong believer of the separation of Church and State. A lot of my belief on this matter is based on history with the results of some of the bloodiest moments in history recorded with Holy Wars (the Crusades); persecution of differences of beliefs (the Spanish inquisitions); and the persecution of Christian difference (with the reign of England's Mary I, or Bloody Mary when she attempted to bring England back to the Catholic Church once she became Queen). History is fraught with examples of man's interpretation of the word of God and attempting to force their interpretation on others without showing the mercy of God to all mankind. So, why would I be interested in having a government that enforced religion – any religion down the throats of mankind when God himself gave us the ability of choice and free will? But what I realized is that what Asbury did was not an example of combining the State with the Church, what we did was to make our leaders accountable to the people. If Christ can give an example of the parable of the persistent widow, in order to teach us the necessity of prayer, then maybe the focus of this sermon was also on the necessity of making our political leaders accountable to all the people they represent regardless to our creed, color, religion, sexual orientation, or gender. So yes, our members stated they saw God in the voting process and they believed it was their moral obligation to vote.

So as long as we have politicians who have no fear of man and no fear of God we as Christians have a responsibility to make these politicians accountable to the people. As long as we have over 45 million people in our nation without healthcare when health care

should be a right not a privilege, we as Christians have a responsibility to make politicians address the needs of the people. As long as we have one of the highest high school attrition rates in the nation, we have a responsibility as Christians to make sure the education system is equitable and reformed to meet the needs of all citizens. As long as we have people that are homeless, hungry, naked, incarcerated unjustly, we as Christians have a responsibility to provide shelter for the homeless, feed the hungry cloth the needy and minister to those in jail because our teacher taught us to do these things. Matthew 25:40 “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

APPENDIX G

Asbury North Participation in Interviews and Transcriptions

Transcript
Voter Mobilization Interview with Tony [REDACTED]
2007

Pastor Greg: Tony do you see God in the Voting process?

Tony: Yes, I do. I see God in the voting process from the standpoint that I believe we are all a part of God and that we believe that God can use anything or anyone but I think God's preferred method of getting things done is to use people. So, yes I see God in the voting process.

Pastor Greg: So do you think that it matters to God whether you vote or not?

Tony: No. I can't say that I do. I think God gives a choice to do what we want to do. We are not automatons but God gives a choice to do what we want to do. By ignoring certain things you have certain penalties for functioning or not performing a duty. One is loss of freedoms if you choose not to vote. I think God gives us exactly what we want. If we want to screw things up and live a world where everyone runs around telling you what to wear when to wear, what you have to have on your head..etc. I think God gives you what you want. So, yes I really don't think God cares which way we go but I think God gives us a choice of doing things that will help or things that will hinder.

Pastor Greg: Do you believe voting is a piece in relationship to what you just said that helps or hinders?

Tony: I think voting definitely helps. I consider it as a positive way our society chooses to deal with issues. If I were in some place like Saudi Arabia it wouldn't be the case. In the Soviet Union the old Soviet Union that wouldn't have been the case. China that wouldn't have been the case.

Pastor Greg: Were you motivated by the Church Initiative to engage in the Community Voter Mobilization Drive.

Tony: Yes.

Pastor Greg: Could you expound on that a little bit?

Tony: I think it gave us an opportunity to go out and contact individuals who seemingly didn't think their vote counted. Because I of apathy comes with it when we don't get what we vote for. People become apathetic and this gave us a chance to go out and remind them that their vote does count and a concentrated effort of those that say your vote doesn't count if they vote it makes a large impact in the system.

Pastor Greg: Has your attitude towards voting changed as a result of this voter mobilization effort?

Tony: Well, not really because I don't miss voting. I have always seen it as an obligation so it really hasn't changed for me. The only thing that the Voter Mobilization Effort did for me is it gave it a structure and made it possible in an organized fashion to contact others in a joint effort so that you could see the impact. I think about going down the street knocking on one door by myself I don't see that as having a large impact to motivate people to vote. But if I get 500 people going out and knocking on doors I can see that impact.

Pastor Greg: Do you feel that nonpartisan process works better on a political campaign than telling people who to vote for?

Tony: I think it does. I believe that as individuals are disenchanted with our two political parties, I think that this form of motivation on a bipartisan or a nonpartisan format is very important because I think it helps people to concentrate on the issues that it's not just about a 20 second sound it is about issues that do affect you and I. When the people have a chance to express it like they did that day when we met here at our church they had a chance to say "do you really want to hear what I think" and they found out that some of the other people had some of the same concerns and that alone carried a lot of energy with it to motivate individuals.

Pastor Greg: Can voting change the social conditions of a community?

Tony: Yes. It can change the social conditions of a community and it is evident of that by the report that the Governor gave us on things that have happened because of his commitment and legislation that he has put forward and things that have been set in process and progress that probably wouldn't have been set in with as much emphasis as his commitment to do that in front of a group. That called him to task. I think any politician that you can get a commitment out of a verbal commitment to come back and then follows up has a positive impact.

Pastor Greg: You are referring to the IAF the Faith Vote Columbus

Tony: The IAF reported back to Faith Vote after saying that they would agree to do that.

Pastor Greg: Do you think that the fact that there are quite a few people involved in that those numbers kind of motivated him to kind of take us seriously.

Tony: Without a doubt. I believe there is a lot of a good intention politicians out there but they really don't know what—they are not called to task to what the people want it is usually the dollar signs that attract them but dollar signs don't vote. So, consequently they are smart enough to realize that they must—if they want to get elected or get re-elected—that they got to go by the people and that is the first test. So I see this as being very important.

Pastor Greg: What was it about the community organization effort that influenced your involvement in the voter mobilization project.

Tony: For me it was a chance to be a part of something much larger than myself and a collective effort more than just me going out and saying, "Hey, go out and vote," but knowing there is a lot of voices echoing the same sentiment that I had. So that was motivation for me to join and the ball was already rolling.

Pastor Greg: Did you notice anything in that rolling of the ball. The process involved in the organizational process that that encouraged you?

Tony: Yes. The fact this had been done in other parts of the country and had been proved effective and that it wasn't a waste of time played greatly with me. They managed to get things changed in other areas. This formula might be something to it.

Pastor Greg: What about this organizing formula that you personally noticed evolving that encouraged you?

Tony: The fact that it was such a wide spectrum of individuals participating: The church, unions, and not only the church you had the mosque, the temples that were involved and it was not only ecumenical but then you drew in the unions and other groups that share in the same concerns.

Pastor Greg: So it was ecumenical, interfaith, and secular. What about when Bishop Sprague came for example that was the first encounter the Asbury church had with the beginning organizational evolution of the IAF with us. Was that impressive to you?

Tony: Very impressive.

Pastor Greg: So, that when we went downstairs after he spoke to us. Could you expound on that a little bit? Did you feel that it was a good tactful approach involving our members and identifying issues right from the beginning.

Tony: Well of course anytime when someone with the status of a Bishop comes demands a lot of attention. I mean how could you not follow along.

Pastor Greg: When we went downstairs and broke up into groups and discussed the issues. Did you feel that that was impressive?

Tony: Yes. It was interesting to hear from the youngest ones up to the older ones. The concerns around the table. We heard from people from different walks of life what their issues were. Housing for seniors, Medicine for Seniors and quite often that kind of thing can get shoved on the back burner. It was interesting to see others including myself pick up on that and were able empathize with what was going on.

Pastor Greg: Now, that process that took place in our local church was also expanded upon when we met in another location and tried to negotiate our issues with other entities. Did you find that to be interesting?

Tony: Yes. I thought that the method of figuring out which one was most important by using the dots and by figuring out what 4 issues was going to be a problem for us was very interesting.

Pastor Greg: Even before we went up to put a dot on the issue that we found were most important we negotiated with some other entities as I recall.. That was interesting.

Tony: To talk to them and really find out what the heat was beneath their issue and how much impact that would have upon them or their group—that they were concerned about. We had a lot of issues that there were to talk about and we managed to boil it down to 4.

Pastor Greg: Do you feel that the Asbury number—our church is not that big of a church but we had a good representation in this process. Do you think that affected the choosing of issues?

Tony: I think that it did weigh heavily into it. The question came to when we began putting up the dots. If you carry individuals to some place that has voting power in determining issues they are like one mind it can have an impact. A great impact upon issues that are selected. Yes, motivating Asbury to be there I think definitely affected the process.

Pastor Greg: Which of the following concerns voted on when we actually got to the dots was...I guess at our local church let's go back to that. There were 5 issues that we brought to St. Paul AME Church. Which one of the 5 do you consider to be the most important. I'll name the 5: Pensions, Jobs, Education, Health Care, and Property Tax Relief for Seniors

Tony: It would be a toss up between Health Care and Education. The Supreme Court ruling in Ohio is in violation of constitutionally in education. That has been pointed out and Governor has expressed that was his main goal to fix that.

Pastor Greg: That was one of your major concerns that went all the way through the process. You are identifying education and health care as your most important issues. You were discussing education and health care being a toss up—Why? In terms of being the most important impact.

Tony: It is really difficult to say which one. I think health care nationally is an issue and collectively Ohio has collectively looking at all the other states. I believe it's the most important issue as far as I'm concerned. But if we look at Ohio I believe Education because we were found in violation and not every state was; a lot of states were not in

violation constitutionally on funding of schools. Ohio from that standpoint—our issue here in Ohio I think for me would be education and funding of the schools.

Pastor Greg: So, if you were to speak on that particular issue. What would you say needs to be done. What is the inequity.

Tony: If you live in an inner city. One of the metropolitan areas property tax—first of all schools are paid by property tax—it's the state's responsibility to pay for schooling. Today, less than 20% of public school system's funding comes from the state which means that if Columbus, for instance, is getting 20% from the state that means 80% of their funding is coming from local property taxes. If you live in a poor and depressed area if 80% of your funding comes from the local taxes it is not going to be nearly as much as if your living in a more prestigious area like Dublin, Upper Arlington, or Worthington where property taxes are a lot more. A lot more people own homes in those areas: 40,000, 50,000; 60,000; 70,000; homes. We are talking several million dollar homes 100,000 dollar homes so the property taxes for their school system is a lot more and that's and inequity.....In my opinion every school or every tax dollar and every dollar that is funded for public schools ought to go through one place. It ought to be divided up according to the number of students in that school district evenly. I don't think a child should get a better education because their parents have more money and are able to give that child more that is not the way it is set up.

Pastor Greg: I appreciate your expounding on that. What persuaded you to become involved in IAF?

Tony: Being asked to participate. That is a very significant thing that your saying.

Pastor Greg: Are you intimating that often times people are not asked to be involved in a political process.

Tony: Yes, I am saying that. I wasn't just asked. Someone convinced me to become involved. Quite often we flick people off, "Do You Want To Do such and such" and they say No, I'm doing something else and we let them go without really convincing them that it is an important thing to do. I think quite often we have a tendency to just ask people and when they don't jump up and down and say I'd love to go we just leave them alone.

Pastor Greg: You mentioned that the reputation of the organization the IAF was impressive to you and then the unfolding organizational process. Community organizing was impressive to you as well.

Tony: Yes. Really. The leadership that was expressed throughout that was impressive. How Ari and those others came in and then they knew just who to say was coming to help out when Bishop Spragues came everyone UM around town said "Wow" maybe we should be involved. So, they would Church said maybe this is worth _____. They brought in some heavy hitters

Pastor Greg: Do you believe the church should be involved in IAF.

Tony: I believe we should do everything we can to promote it. Especially because it's nonpartisan. Like I said earlier I see it as the church's responsibility to get involved in the type of society we ultimately have.

Pastor Greg: You believe that the church directly or indirectly impacting the society by involving itself by getting people to come out and vote.

Tony: Without a doubt. Because we all have human needs. Corporations don't have human needs they have dollar sign needs. But when we get the people involved at that level we understand that their needs are important. You understand how many needs you have in common with your next door neighbor. Your sitting back saying It would be nice if we could do this or that you find out that there are 10,000 other people sitting around with the same agenda. When you ban together and get those people involved motivating others things happen.

Pastor Greg: Just to follow up and ask in a different way.. Do you think that the church should be concerned about whether people vote or not.

Tony: Without a doubt.

Pastor Greg: Do you believe encouraging the disenfranchised vote is a mission of the church.

Tony: Yes, I do.

Pastor Greg: I don't want to put words in your mouth. But from what I'm gathering you mean not just the enfranchised—everybody--

Tony: Everybody.

Transcript Voter Mobilization Interview with Ethel 2007

Pastor Greg: This conversation is with Ethel . I just wanted to ask you, did you recognize a moral obligation to vote.

Ethel: Yes. Goodness Yes.

Pastor Greg: Could you expound on that a little bit.

Ethel: Yes, I was involved in the civil rights struggle while I was growing up, people had to pay poll taxes in Virginia where my grandparents lived and so therefore ever since I have been old enough to vote I vote every year. I don't care where I am in the world, I

vote. I vote absentee if I am not here. This is a privilege and we ought to take advantage of it.

Pastor Greg: So, that poll tax issue. Could you explain that a little bit?

Ethel: I don't remember a lot about it, all I know is that my Grandpa always complained about having to pay poll tax.

Pastor Greg: And so that encouraged you.

Ethel: Yes.

Pastor Greg: Do you recognize the presence of God as you participate in the Voter Mobilization Effort.

Ethel: Yes.

Pastor Greg: How did you...

Ethel: Because God calls you work on Justice Issues and to elect public officials who will serve the majority of the people and not a chosen few. This is our responsibility as Christians.

Pastor Greg: Yes. It is indeed. Do you think that it matters to God whether we vote or not.

Ethel: Goodness yes. Yes. I know that God loves us and accepts us as we are whether we vote or not God's love is going to be constant, but I still think that in our response to God's love we have a responsibility to vote.

Pastor Greg: And so you not only see this as a secular responsible but you see this as a moral duty.

Ethel: Of course, yes I do.

Pastor Greg: Because it's pleasing to God.

Ethel: Yes.

Pastor Greg: Ok. Were you motivated by the Church Initiative to engage in a community Voter Mobilization Effort?

Ethel: I wouldn't have given this all the time and effort if I weren't motivated. I'm really motivated yes, and this is because I have always been motivated.

Pastor Greg: So this particular initiative by the IAF (Industrial Area Foundation) was not the beginning point of your motivation to be involved

Ethel: No this is a continuation of efforts throughout my life.

Pastor Greg: This kind of served as a vehicle for you to be passionately involved. We never touched on why you vote is there anything more you want to say about that just plain if somebody were to come up to you and ask "Ethel, why do you vote?"

Ethel: I feel that every vote counts. When you realize that President Bush got in office, not with the majority vote but he got in because of the Electoral College and if more people had voted then this wouldn't have happened. I have seen this over and over again. Your vote does count.

Ethel: You might not think that it does. But I think it does.

Pastor Greg: ok and what do you—as far as the IAF involvement were you encouraged or did it matter whether they were involved in a nonpartisan effort. They did not encourage people to vote for or against a candidate but they had a nonpartisan effort and pretty much emphasized issues and just getting out to vote as opposed to voting for a candidate. Did you feel good about that or did that matter?

Ethel: That mattered a lot. I have been really active in voting for a candidate. I put a lot of time and energy in doing that over the years. But this really appealed to me because it is important that we vote, and hopefully you vote the way that I vote but if you don't then that's okay. Your still voting, and it still affects your rights.

Pastor Greg: In your contact with the people that you were trying to encourage to come out and vote did you feel that it was an advantage or disadvantage to have a non partisan stance.

Ethel: I think it was definitely an advantage because we were not asked to vote for this particular candidate because they might not be for that candidate. We were asking them to exercise their right to vote. To me that made all the difference in the world.

Pastor Greg: So, deep down inside your saying that you value even if the person may vote against your candidate you value that person to vote. They may vote for a person that you are just wholeheartedly against. You value that person's right to vote and you would encourage that person to vote anyway.

Ethel: That's right.

Pastor Greg: So, what was it about the community organizing effort that influenced your involvement in the voter mobilization drive?

Ethel: I have been involved in community organizing all my life. I am just doing what comes naturally.

Pastor Greg: Okay. That really was a big deal because you have done it many times. Did you learn anything from the way IAF did it in terms of getting volunteers and training them and getting them involved in community organizing—did you see that as being unique or did you say “been there done this.”

Ethel: I too was trained by Saul Alinsky and so therefore this approach to doing things was not new to me.

Pastor Greg:

Ethel: Common sense tells me that you always start with a smaller group with a neighborhood group and you get them involved by finding out what are their primary concerns. And then as you find out their primary concerns then you do the same process you take all the _____ and you bring them to a common place and then you put all concerns out and then you choose. The way in which it was done by using the dots was very effective.

Pastor Greg: Using the dots; What do you mean?

Ethel: Because we put all the concerns up and then everyone could choose three.

Pastor Greg: And they literally put a dot

Ethel: Each person literally put a dot there, so therefore it was ownership. And you have to have ownership. People feel that it's theirs they are going to do something about it to make sure it is carried out.

Pastor Greg: So the collaborative effort of getting people right from the beginning they begin to say what they are passionate about and what they would like to see affected in their communities and then pulling other entities or stakeholders together and then coming together and still having your own individual opportunity to put something on the topic. You thought that was something real effective.

Ethel: To me—that is the only way that you do things.

Pastor Greg: Because like you were saying it makes people feel like their vested.

Ethel: You now ownership of it. To them.

Pastor Greg: So, being invested as an individual and feeling like what your sharing is of great value is critically important to you in terms of community organizing.

Ethel: It has to be of great value to you. And even though that which is of great value to you is not one of the ones chosen. You have had a say like every one else

had a say and so yours didn't win this time but you know it was brought to the attention of everybody.

Pastor Greg: So, you were listened too and maybe what I hear you saying is that even though maybe your subject did not get chosen by the overall group you had every opportunity to share your interest. That is critically important to you. As opposed to what?

Ethel: As opposed to someone saying and not going through and looking at these things that you need to do.

[KC1]**Pastor Greg:** Kind of of a dictatorship type of thing. We are going to use you.

Ethel: Or to choose a few select people and then just turn to them only. And then and not to the whole community.

Pastor Greg: Which of the 5 concerns voted in this IAF effort (the five of them were pensions, jobs, education, health care, and property tax relief for senior citizens that may have basically been a process that took place right here at Asbury basically my study anyway. Which one of these is most impactful to you to the overall community or when you were going to put your dots on one of those which one was most important?

Ethel: I put my dots on Health Care. On Education and on jobs.

Pastor Greg: Was health care your primary interest or did you see those as equal.

Ethel: I really saw a continuum of all of them being equally important.

Pastor Greg: Let's take those three really quickly. Health care—why was that so important to you?

Ethel: Because, look at all the people in this city who do not have proper health care.

And you know if you don't have proper health care you can die.

Pastor Greg:

Ethel: Even with health care because HMO heads. Health care is vitally important, but as important is the whole thing of education. Because as Columbus becomes more and more black or non white the less attention is paid to the _____ the schools,

Pastor Greg: You believe a quality education is a quality education.

Ethel: Of [KC2] course.

Pastor Greg: and should be given to everyone regardless of their _____. So education is even more of an issue to you because it is _____ for opportunity and knowledge. And I think your third one was jobs.
_____ demand.

Ethel: A living wage. Some many people have jobs but they don't have a living wage.

So, I think it is of utmost importance.

Pastor Greg:

Ethel:

Pastor Greg: So you want them to have a living wage in order to sustain the family.

Ethel: And see you have to have a decent education in order to be qualified for a living wage. You have to have good health care so you can be in school.

Pastor Greg: So those are three very critical issues that you think are extremely important. What persuaded you to become involved in IAF? What was the one single most thing that persuaded you to become as involved and Ethel you have been extremely involved.

Ethel: Nothing. I'm just doing what I've always done. So it was really no big deal to me. And I knew it would take time and I'm always willing to give time and energy to _____ needs to be done.

Pastor Greg: So Bishop Sprague wasn't a single most factor to you.

Ethel: I would have been involved anyhow.

Pastor Greg: Let me share with you real quickly the thing that really motivated me to get involved with this organization was when we went downstairs after Bishop spoke and he asked people to share their compassion and what they thought of governor _____. In other words pay attention to and the people standing up and articulating their passions and their interest was a strong influence for me as far as

Ethel: Everybody has a passion. An interest in decent living and they just an opportunity to be heard.

Pastor Greg: And that was the one.... Yes that's important

Ethel: And the fact that through the process of Faith Vote Columbus. They saw this going through the whole process which culminated the other Sunday night when the Governor came and gave a report. So, therefore the process has worked.

Pastor Greg: It was not only an outlined process everybody knew was going to unfold. But it actually unfolded in a very positive and constructive way. That is very encouraging.

Ethel: And that lends to the credibility to this and we are not going to have a difficult time getting more people involved..

Pastor Greg: Because they say how well organized this thing kicked off. Do you believe that the church should be involved in IAF.

Ethel: Yes.

Pastor Greg: Could you kind of expound on that because a lot of people talk about the separation of church and state. The church shouldn't be involved in politics.

Ethel: See, to me the church should be at the fore front the church should be leading the way. And anytime there are justice issues. Anytime there are people in our congregation in our community that are a part of the disposed and the ignored then the church has to take a stand. We are called upon to minister to the hopeless. So in ministering the hopeless it gets us involved.

Pastor Greg: That is very interesting to me. What I would like you to do is draw a connection to the specific voter turnout effort to the church involvement. In other words do you see this voter turnout effort as being essential important factor for the church to take part in. Could you expound on that a little bit?

Ethel:

Pastor Greg:

Ethel: People talk about the civil rights movement the church was at the fore front of all of that. If it had not been for the black church. _____ the black church and the church was at the fore front because people understood what the church is about. The church has to take leadership. We have to be out in the forefront. We can't just do a little bit and sit back. And we can't just place the responsibility on someone to do it for us. And the pastor has the banner and we are followers.

Pastor Greg: So, are you saying to me that voting is a justice issue. Of course it is. Okay could you expound on that a little bit.

Ethel: Because who gets in office determines what services are going to be available.

Pastor Greg: It is just that simple. If you don't vote you might get ignored by _____.

Ethel: You see it over and over again.

Pastor Greg: So, you believe that it is a moral issue. Of

Ethel: Of course it is.

Pastor Greg: Because if people the privilege to vote they may cause calamity not only to themselves but also to the community. My last question is do you believe encouraging the disenfranchised to vote is a mission that the church be involved in.

Ethel: The church's mission is to encourage everybody to vote. The franchised as well as the disenfranchised. Everyone whose name is on their church rolls. Everyone who lives in the community around the church. It is the church's responsibility to see that those folks get to vote.

Pastor Greg: So this is not just a poor people's issue, or an issue of the indigent.

Ethel: Oh no. We are Christian but we are also citizens. To be a good Christian you have to be a good citizen. You don't have to be a Christian to be a good citizen. Because we come from the Christian orientation it is our responsibility.

Pastor Greg: Okay. So there is a connection between being a good Christian and being a good citizen. One of those connections is voting.

Pastor Greg: Ethel I appreciate you sharing on this. You were instrumental in getting a lot of people in the Asbury family get involved in the process. Your energy is just amazing to watch. Is there anything you would like to conclude in saying about this whole process at this point?

Ethel: I would really like Asbury to be at the forefront if Asbury can, but this takes your commitment to be in there because you are our designated leader. And you know people follow the pastor even if the pastor be good or bad people follow the pastor. Some people will. I would really like to see Asbury to become the shining example. Asbury is the example because we get so many people out and we are a small membership church. I would like to see us do more and we can do more. It takes time, energy and commitment. And that is just what it takes but it can happen. We can change some folk in this church who sit back and don't do very much. Like these things.

Pastor Greg: And that is why I want to grab a little bit when you say we can change. My project has to do with attitudes and values toward voting so you do believe there is an attitude behind people if they don't vote. There is an attitude behind people if they do vote. So about those who do not vote do you feel that this process that we have been through could be a highly encouraging process?

Ethel: I think this process has all ready helped change people's lives. Do you think the people came out on the 2nd of December in the rain folks like Roy and Dorothy Miller. These are old folk. I'm older than all of them. It was amazing. This time of year alone they wouldn't have gotten them out. Several things this year they have seen us working hard at it and we've kept them abreast of the process and therefore they are aware that _____ will come

Pastor Greg: And people that they highly regard when they see those people involved in something they begin to search their own hearts about this whole thing about voting. I want to thank you so very much for coming to share with me this evening and discuss these interview questions. I appreciate it very much. God Bless You.

Transcript
Faith Vote Columbus Interview with Jean
2007

Pastor Greg: I am interviewing Jean a member of Asbury North who participated in Faith Vote Columbus. Did you recognize a moral obligation to vote?

Jean : I've always voted ever since I turned 21 years old. I vote primaries and generals. I never missed one in 50 plus years.

Pastor Greg: In response to my question. You're basically saying that the moral aspect of voting is not a factor or do you believe that you have a moral obligation to vote.

Jean : I don't feel that it is an obligation. I feel more like it is a right and I feel that I should take advantage of that right.

Pastor Greg: And so for example. Do you see God in the voting process?

Jean : Yes.

Pastor Greg: Did you sense the presence of God as you participated in Faith Vote Columbus-Voter Mobilization Movement?

Jean : In some instances. In others not really. The ones that I feel where God is the people were pleasant and they accepted us when we visited or talked on the phone because the first round, most of mine were on the phone, and then I had the chance to do the walk and people were not really nasty but they weren't very receptive.

Pastor Greg: So do you think it matters to God whether you vote or not?

Jean : Yes I think so. I think that is one of our personal choices. He gives us another chance to make a choice. That is the reason I said that I don't think mine is moral. It is more I feel it's a right. I think God works in that choice.

Pastor Greg: So, you choose to vote. So how did God work in that? Or you choose to help others get registered and get out to vote. Where do you see God in that?

Jean : It gives us a chance to meet people face to face in the walks and then when you have a congenial person on the other end of the phone instead of someone hanging up on you and cursing you out, but I think part of that has to come from me because it's how I approach. Do I approach people with a smile in my voice or a smile on my face that they are more receptive to my voice.

Pastor Greg: So the moral part you are not dealing with that and that made me go back to your statement where you said it is your right to vote. The civil rights movement and what Dr. Martin Luther King and others did to open up the right to vote. Do you feel that there is a moral obligation to vote? Do you feel it is your moral duty to vote? The moral part is where God comes in. You are a person of Faith and as a person of Faith in God do you believe that it is your duty to participate in a secular thing called voting in order to satisfy God or to do what you believe God is asking you to do and it may be on the basis of your involvement as a person in society to make sure that certain people are elected to do the things that you feel God has called you to do.

Jean : That is a hard one.

Pastor Greg: It is difficult for you to really focus in on that. I guess if I were to compare you with a secular person who has no affinity to God whatsoever and I were to ask that person that question. That person would probably give me a humanistic answer. That would be that all human beings have potential and that there are certain road blocks out there and participating in voting rights eliminates some of the road blocks and gives people an opportunity to have a better life or something like that. A moral person would probably look at it as it would be a step toward helping a person become whole and to free that person to deal with their own soul. If you are creating the kind of society that would eliminate some of the impoverished issues, racial issues, health care is needed. For example do you see health care as being an issue that Christians should involve.....

Jean : Okay. I see what your are saying. Yes to all of those. To me I feel that everybody should be covered with the cost of living and the cost of everything going up and we have people that are out there and they can't afford it. Because everybody is not fortunate enough or whatever their circumstances in life may have done to them for them. They probably are not retired or never held a job where they could pay into an insurance plan or something like that. Yes, I feel that the government should get involved. We are supposed to be the richest country in the world why can't they take care of the people here.

Pastor Greg: Going back to the moral part. Do you feel that way because of your relationship with God or do you just feel that way because you feel all people should have the basic right of health care insurance.

Jean : I think my relationship with God probably makes me look at things a little differently than I would if I didn't have that relationship because in my life He has always been there and He has always guided me through. I feel the right direction.

Pastor Greg: Do you feel that one of the directions that God has guided you is your motivation to get people out to vote?

Jean : Yes.

Pastor Greg: Do you see that as a motivating factor that God gave you to have the sensitivity to get people out to vote to better their situation.

Jean : Yes. I think so.

Pastor Greg: Were you motivated by the church initiative to engage in a community voter mobilization drive. Were you motivated by that?

Jean : Yes. Because I have always been interested in most things but never really had the time or never took the time to because I know this is a part of this—my mother worked in the polls for years until she died in fact. I always wanted to work in the polls but I was always employed and you know when your employed you can't say well I'm going over to the polls today. So anyway I've always been interested.

Pastor Greg: So, this Faith Vote Columbus Voter Mobilization Drive motivated you to get involved in the process.

Jean : Yes.

Pastor Greg: Has your attitude towards voting changed since your involvement with Faith Vote Columbus?

Jean : Not changed because I have always been interested. I've always thought people that sit home and don't vote then don't complain about whatever happens because if you didn't take time to go for a few minutes and vote even when we had manual voting and now that we have the electronic. Sometimes you look at..... No, I've always been there.

Pastor Greg: Can voting change the social conditions of the community? Is that why you took so much time to encourage people to get out and vote?

Jean : Yes because I think that is the only way we are going to make a change, but you can't just in front of a TV and listen to all the arguments of the people that are trying to get nominated because being human they have tendency to down each other in order to be in the spot. I think that takes a little study. You have to use your own brain. To me it is a little education.

Pastor Greg: What was it about the community organizing effort that influenced your involvement in Faith Vote Columbus Voter Mobilization Drive.

Jean : I think it was great. We had some training for those who had never done this before and then the experience of doing it. I think the training and the experience of the actual participation on the telephone and walking house to house meeting people.

Pastor Greg: So that part was really well done. Well organized. You enjoyed that piece. Out of the five areas that were identified at St. Paul—which of them was most

impactful to you. The five were pensions, jobs, education, health care, property tax relief for senior citizens. Which one of those five had the most impact on you and turned your interest, motivation, attitude, and desire.

Jean : All of them. Because I think they are all needed. First of all the jobs should be number one. Because with a job you could do more. You could participate and you could probably get your own health care, education. So first thing you need a job.

Pastor Greg: So you think that the most impactful of all the five is jobs. You feel that if everyone had a decent paying job that would reduce. A job with a living wage that would take the country in a very positive direction. What persuaded you to become involved in IAF?

Jean : Well curiosity first. When it was announced about the meeting after church with the Bishop and we got to get into groups where we could say what things should be thought about.

Pastor Greg: You were _____ to discuss various issues that you would like the Governor to deal with.

Jean : Yes. I enjoyed that. That was our initial and so after that I haven't missed a meeting except at First Corinthian when I was out of town but I have attended everything. I found it very lifting.

Pastor Greg: So the involvement in the IAF was very uplifting to you and you believe the way the started off was the thing that started your interest. You had a chance to voice the areas that you wanted the Governor to deal with.

Jean : Right.

Pastor Greg: Do believe the church should be involved in this IAF movement? Why?

Jean : Yes. Because the church of today is not involved enough in the things that the church needs to be involved in. I don't know—I can't talk about our church because our church is not like other churches. The churches seem to be so interested in money, money, money.... and they should be about getting people, people, people,..... and maybe then we will get enough money to do our missions to take care of people because the church of old they used to be about helping.

Pastor Greg: In this situation. It doesn't require a lot of money to encourage people to just exercise their right to vote. So was that something that you think the church should be involved in?

Jean : Yes. I see where you are coming from. The church should be involved because the church also is a learning place number one and with this IAF..

Pastor Greg: Do you think the church should be concerned whether or not people vote?

Jean : We have to first of all get them to register and think that is where the church could help come in to encourage people first to register so they can vote sometimes you find that people that say—"I never vote." My response: "Have you every really thought about it. This is your country, this is your state. I think the church can help with the teaching or but to encourage people to register and then to vote after their registered. And then you have people that may be registered and haven't voted that is where we could come in.

Pastor Greg: The IAF movement really didn't pay attention much to people who are not registered to vote they paid attention to people who were registered to vote and were not exercising their right to vote even though they were registered. In closing if I were to say "Vote" and then say "God" how would you pulls those two together.

Jean : Well, that is hard to answer for somebody else. God is in my life 24-7, everyday. When I'm quiet He speaks to me. I think He puts things in front of me and you may not be aware of it but if you just follow whatever's in front of you this is good because there are other things out there too. That to me is how he works in my life.

Pastor Greg: About the voting piece. You describe how God functions in your life....

Jean : Well I think when He is putting things in front of you He is giving you the choice. No, the right to choose and think that is how that works because if God presents it—it is not going to be wrong but I think God gives you the ability to make the choices when He is there you are going to make the right choice.

Pastor Greg: So, why would one make a choice to vote?

Jean : To better things---if things aren't going the way they should go or the way you think God would have them to go since He put us here to take care of this earth and we see this not going right then if the leaders are not making it right then if you see others talking about improving or taking the right course then you want to look at that person or those people and make your choice that way.

Pastor Greg: So, the relationship is that God has given us free choice to make the right choice. And you believe the right choice is to vote and that helps better our society. Thank you, Jean .

Transcript of Interview
December 2007
With Vanessa [REDACTED]

Pastor Greg: Vanessa did you recognize a moral obligation to voting?

Vanessa : Yes

Pastor Greg: Could you expound on that a little bit?

Vanessa : I think we have a moral responsibility and we accept that we live in a democracy and we have a moral responsibility to vote to make sure that politicians are elected that represent your interest.

Pastor Greg: So, do you see God in the voting process?

Vanessa : I don't necessarily see God in the voting process, but I do think that God gives us the ability and always gives us choices to make and choices that can make it easier to apply to mankind and I think that the only way that you can do that in an organized community is through voting for representatives that hear and know what your concerns are.

Pastor Greg: So, do you think it matters to God whether we vote or not?

Vanessa : I think it matters to God how we treat others and I think it matters to God how we treat others in society and I believe that not only do you have to do it through what you do personally but I also believe that the organized government has a responsibility too, and the only way you can make sure that it's not a religious where I'm trying to litigate or not litigate it is not a religious thing where I'm trying to legislate religions or morality or anything like that.

Pastor Greg: Trying to force your religious values on someone.

Vanessa : Yes... I'm not trying to force religious values on someone but I think that there are some necessities for life that can only be addressed through the organized government and in that aspect I think we do have the moral responsibility to vote and I'm not sure how God views but I know He views us treating other people in a fair manner. It's like a circle.

Pastor Greg: But as far as treating someone in a fair manner it is not only providing them food or clothing or other things that you do philanthropically or you do through other charities but it could also be through the vote. Is that correct?

Vanessa : It is through the vote if you're not blinded by the political jargon of political rhetoric or you vote for somebody because they are cute or but you vote somebody because the issues that they address are going to enhance the life of the community as a whole.

Pastor Greg: Where you motivated by God by the community church initiative to participate in the voter mobilization drive?

Vanessa : Yes. I probably there were others I could have joined if I had an interest in them but I didn't go looking for them and this one came into the church and I was happy to participate.

Pastor Greg: Has your attitude toward voting changed since the Voter Mobilization Drive?

Vanessa : No. My attitudes toward voting were challenged during the- I believe- the 2000 election I believe that election was tainted they just out-in-out cheated. I don't care what anybody says or any scientist they go back and they do analysis and they come up

with something that says they didn't.... In my heart I think they cheated so I don't even know if I voted the next year just because you know.. "What difference does it make" when it's really important. I think that if you can get the population that needs assistance the most to vote then that's a very important thing to do.

Pastor Greg: Do you think the nonpartisan process works better than supporting a candidate, a campaign, or supporting a person.

Vanessa : It works better for me and as a public employee I'm not allowed to work on partisan politics, I'm prohibited by law.

Pastor Greg: As far as your relationship to Asbury North do you feel that this IAF movement drive helped us to look at the issues better by virtue of being a nonpartisan

Vanessa : I think it did and I think that more people being a predominately black church more people were I think that quite a few republicans in the pews but I think making it so that it was nonpartisan was more important as far as working on the issues I think for black folks it doesn't make a difference whether you are a republican or a democrat when it comes to addressing issues of hunger, jobs , and education and things of that nature I think that those things generally level out to having the same weight for both parties.

Pastor Greg: So what was it about the community organizing effort that influenced your involvement in the voter mobilization project? Do you remember how it started when Bishop Spragg came and spoke and then he had us go downstairs and identify issues that the Governor was supposed to address etc. What is it about that community organizing? You remember us going over to St. Paul and then negotiating the very issues we discussed locally with the entities—agencies and unions etc. Other churches even.

Vanessa : The fact that it was organizing the people and it was trying to get a good shot at doing it. Everything IAF did really wasn't spelled out to completion not the folks that were working in the rank and file anyway. I mean there was this and that and then unless you actually followed through the entire process you couldn't really find out what the heck they were really doing or until you begin to see all the issues or that it was an attempt to get ownership first for ideas and concepts and to get the people to have hope by getting other people out to vote there was a possibility that they could affect a change. I think that's but it wasn't that it was done in a wrong way or even a unique manner it's just that it was so separated and its steps that you couldn't see what the major goal was even though.. I don't think that when we first got started about addressing the community needs and stuff I don't think it was ever explained that it would be a get out and vote campaign as it did. I may be wrong on that but in retrospect I remember us getting together and looking for the concerns of those issues that concerned us what we would want our next governor to do.

Pastor Greg: One of the things they were to do (If you want these issues to be addressed you have to get out and vote because if you don't get out and vote the politicians normally ignore those communities that.

Vanessa : Right. I know all that but when they first came with Bishop Spragg here it was just a matter of identifying issues and then negotiating on issues and then like that but it didn't ...

Pastor Greg: It probably intentionally did not do that because they wanted to get you to feel a sense of ownership on those issues first before they asked you to start getting out to vote. That is my opinion but

Vanessa : I understand that but again I don't like to be led. I don't like to be kept in the dark. If you want me to do something then just spell it out what you want me to do, and I

will do it to the best of my ability with the agenda that you give but if you are going to spoon feed me along the way I have a tendency to get resentful.

Pastor Greg: Well maybe because of your level of experience but a lot of people can't take a full spoon they have to be guided along in order to get that motivation because some people are cynical about voting I mean they're very cynical about voting. I think if they started out saying that they we are going to encourage people to vote that might have been something that feeds right in to people's cynicism.

Vanessa : We didn't start getting cynical until I think I don't think a lot of us got as cynical as we could until the 2000 election. That was very, very depressing.

Pastor Greg: Disheartening to a lot of people. Out of the 5 concerns that were identified among the Asbury members who came downstairs which was a good number which one do you think was most important or most impactful to you: Pensions, Jobs, Education, Health Care, Property Tax Relief for seniors.

Vanessa : Well, I think I the pensions is a direct hit on me just because it is dealt with head on making sure that 1,400,000 direct pensions run by the government entities and the state would not be privatized that that was a direct impact on me but the education piece it gave me mental peace that we will put somebody in office that will be really paying attention to the needs of the youth. Throughout all of the communities white folks and black folks poor and rich they will be paying attention to those needs those educational needs.

Pastor Greg: So, education is very important to you? It is something that you feel could really impact the community as a whole and you feel that families Let me just ask you a few supplemental questions

Vanessa : When we figured out the impacts on pensions the public pensions it wasn't just the 1.4 million throughout the state current that would be getting their families, their spouses, the extended care and it turned out with a population of over 11 million in Ohio over 12/13% or more that had been impacted with a loss of income of that nature and they privatized and cut benefits and loss money and that is a very significant loss to any community.

Pastor Greg: What persuaded you to be involved with IAF?

Vanessa : You guys.

Pastor Greg: Your saying emanated from the church leadership.

Vanessa : You and Ethel I think they you both asked me to do it and I said okay.

Pastor Greg: Do you believe that the church should be involved in a project like IAF. Why?

Vanessa : Yes. The church needs to be concerned with issues that concern the community. If you can't guarantee if you're talking about doing unto your brothers as you would have be done unto you or if you're talking about making sure that you love your neighbor like you love yourself—Love God rather if you take all that into consideration then you want to make sure that people who are placed into office are not greedy, self-centered parasites that thrive on power and money approach to look out for the best interest of the people. It is my opinion that you have a lot of politicians that are like that they get into positions of power that the begin to love the power and they love the money and everything that goes with the power and they generally sell their souls—I feel in order to get a vote—they sell the people short.

Pastor Greg: So the church's involvement with the IAF could curtail some of that. Identifying issues and only voting for those politicians because of ..

Vanessa : As long as the church follows the.... One of the most direct things in the teachings of Christ would have been his ability to tell the truth. When you do end up telling the truth on issues then a lot of the stuff that politicians have a tendency to mask; the lies, the self-interest, the spending idolized so they can get richer, cutting off peoples utilities or everything making food cost more because they want more money, or turning a blind eye to the people who are messing over people in general. If the church can't bring these truths out and it doesn't have to be for religion or not for religion or doesn't have to be any type of a religious aspect just the truths to the people that make them have hope that they can have better lives.

Pastor Greg: But you do see a connection—in other words—if there is one love God then do you see God as being in more places then inside the church or, or synagogue, or temple.

Vanessa : Yes, He is all over. A lot of people because of all the rhetoric that is out there the truth is so obscured.

Pastor: Your position is that in as much as we have faith in God that we should be as much involved in the community as anyone because God is there.

Pastor Greg: So you think this Faith Vote Columbus is just another opportunity for outreach is that what I hear you saying

Vanessa : Yes.

Vanessa : It was another outreach effort to the people in the church all the churches actually. We got involved and all the people that were doing outreach were the other republicans.

Pastor: Thank you very much for your time.

**Transcript of Interview
With Latanya [REDACTED] #13
December 2007**

Pastor Greg: Did you recognize a moral obligation to vote?

Latanya: Yes.

Pastor Greg: Could you expound on that a little bit?

Latanya: I think that it allows me to have a voice in the political process and what's governing our lives because that is a system if you're not involved in and don't have knowledge of then you're not sure what goes on within it. So, I have an interest in being involved for that reason so that I know that that is what sometimes governs our lives, our neighborhoods, is policies that have been approved sometimes approved without knowledge of what they really mean. There is a moral obligation.

Pastor Greg: So, do you see God in the voter mobilization process?

Latanya: I see God in everything, in control of the entire universe. Yes.

Pastor Greg: Do you think it matters to God whether we vote or not?

Latanya: Of course I do. I think God has given us choices all throughout the scripture and I think that we need to exercise the choices that are provided to us in the political system as well.

Pastor Greg: The choice that you had exercised in order to please God with relationship to voting would be to the benefit of the community at large.

Latanya: It would be to have some sustainable growth in the communities. That is how I see God in guiding the politics of what we do it is to really create growth as human beings.

Pastor Greg: Were you motivated by the church initiative to engage in a community voter mobilization drive such as was introduced to us by IAF?

Latanya: I was pretty pleased to see that because I believe that the church should be involved. The church really has a lot more clout than they give themselves credit for because they are in an environment where people can be mobilized and people could be helped to understand the church being a place that is taught or somehow integrated enough that we are clear on what they are doing.

Pastor Greg: You remember how this process started when Bishop Spragg came and spoke and the people went downstairs to identify issues that we felt the Governor should address and then eventually we went from there over to St. Paul AME church we negotiated our concerns with the concerns of other labor entities and other churches and agencies and then we put dots on those concerns we thought were most important, so were you motivated by that organizing were you motivated by that initiative that started here at Asbury and went on to negotiate with other entities.

Latanya: Yes. I think it a whole new energy to the church itself. Of just being involved outside of the walls of the building. It was a wonderful experience because the church has had a history of being community involved but to bring that back in such a fashion through politics was energizing.

Pastor Greg: Has your attitude towards voting changed as a result of the voter mobilization drive?

Latanya: I would say yes in that I was able to go door-to-door working with IAF and the response from the people in having that personal contact seemed to have been appreciated and that was encouraging to me because sometimes I think that is needed.

Pastor Greg: So you really enjoyed the contact with the people that you were encouraging to vote. It was almost like an outreach from the church to the community. Do you feel that the nonpartisan process works better than working for a political figure, or campaign, or telling people who to vote for?

Latanya: I like that approach because it gives you a holistic approach and you don't have to limit yourself and I like that.

Pastor Greg: You are saying the partisan would have limited you to certain political figures but the nonpartisan approach what does that do? Does that help you focus more on the issues?

Latanya: That helps you focus more on the issues, and it keeps you away from identifying something that is probably personal to you as a voter and a topic to this individual door-to-door but the response that I saw in a lot of the people that were interested in what I was saying; they were interested in the issues, they were interested in the fact that it was a nonpartisan and that I was representing a nonpartisan organization because I think that it put some balance there (because I don't know what your political preference is) but when you immediately identify your representing a nonpartisan organization and that is why you were out their door that day, that helps.

Pastor Greg: Could you speak a little bit more about the issues you discussed with some of the people and did that encourage them to vote given the fact the politicians normally don't pay attention to the communities that don't normally go out to vote and therefore the issues are dead.

Latanya: Some of the data that we were able to have with us as we went door to door helped in terms of the percentage of people in the community that did go out and vote. We were able to share that whether the numbers were good or bad. And we talked about the need for being able to mobilize the community door by door themselves to make sure that everybody got out to vote that day and to network with what agencies that could help make that happen whether it was transportation to the polls, whether it was absentee balloting the IAF when we went out when we were able to share that kind of resource with the people who may have needed it.

Pastor Greg: Why is it important for people to go out and vote in numbers?

Latanya: It really allows the politician to pay a little more attention to that community or to that neighborhood and the needs and the things that the neighborhood are saying that whether it is trees, lights, sidewalks, better schools, playgrounds, whatever that neighborhood is wanting. The numbers of people mobilizing themselves and going out to vote they would be more listened to even through their block watch associations, neighborhood associations. When they are in numbers they are able to get things done. I think that that needs to be stressed because one or two sometimes aren't seen or heard. Triple, double, quadruple, that and you have more of an affect.

Pastor: So, what was it about the community organizing effort that influenced your involvement in community voter mobilization drive?

Latanya: It flowed to me when I was involved. It was a very good strategic step-by-step thought through plan of how to bring individuals together to bring what happened in the 2006 and I like the organization of it. When I would come I would know where I was coming to and what type of meeting, what type of gathering, what type of training, and I was able to do some role playing with IAF at a community meeting that we held along with you Pastor that was well received: The topic was: How do you handle yourself going door-to-door, and what kinds of things might you run into and what type of questions you might get asked. I think we did a very good job in that role play and I think we opened up peoples comfort in going out.

Pastor: Were you a little surprised to see how many people from Asbury came down after Bishop Spragg spoke to really discuss issues and what do you think the impact of that was?

Latanya: I was, but I was also.... I just think the energy level of the leadership here at the church including yourself and others helped mobilize the people it put an interest out there. You talked about it amongst the congregation and there were announcements in the bulletin and you really.... t-shirts were made and it was just so many things were done amongst the congregation that were inviting and they wanted to participated. They wanted to come.

Pastor: You were motivated not only personally, but also by what you observed in our congregation and the energy level was pretty high!

Latanya: Yes.

Pastor: Do you think that had anything to do with what they were being asked what their concerns were which it is kind of different than most situations they got a chance to really sit down and talk about issues.

Latanya: I haven't seen that done before in a setting like that. Where I saw the interest level. It could be the timing of what is going on in environment, in our homes, in our communities that ...

Pastor: Could you expound on that a little bit?

Latanya: It's the more we read and study and learn and the more we were opened up to information and I think that the energy level that we saw with the people participating was the energy level of what was needed for people to be educated and made aware of what the issues are to know that they can do something about it and I think people are wanting to do something now. I don't know if I can explain where that energy might be coming from but I'm thankful that it is there. It is like a positive force of change that people are wanting and it just could be result of the times that we are living in.

Pastor: Out of the issues that were identified at Asbury North downstairs there were 5 issues that we were concerned about. Which of the 5 do you consider to be most important to you: Pensions, Jobs, education, health care, or property tax relief for senior citizens?

Latanya: Health care.

Pastor Greg: You said health care. Why?

Latanya: Because I think that healthcare should be provided for everyone all across the board from the babies to the senior citizens. I think that health care should be accessible not just health care but it needs to be health care that is accessible and easily explained.

Pastor Greg: So, that is a vital issue to you that would have a tremendous impact on the community and people at large. Let me ask you some supplemental questions. What persuaded you to become involved in IAF?

Latanya: When I heard about IAF. I know what it means to mobilize people for voter turnout, and I know how important voting is and some say "It don't matter if I vote or not it is not going to make a difference," but I beg to differ with that mindset, so if I beg to differ from that I'm an advocate for change that I'd have to involve myself with something that is kind of on my side that I believe in personally so when I heard about IAF and when I heard it was nonpartisan and it being an issue driven group of people who were really concerned about neighborhoods and communities it sounded like something I would want to be involved in.

Pastor Greg: So, you already had the interest you just found another vehicle to express that interest. Do you think the church should be concerned whether or not people should vote?

Latanya: Yes. I think the church should be concerned a lot of churches are not. Not sure how to mix religion and politics together. Yes I think it needs to be real clear across the pulpit.

Pastor Greg: So, you do think that the church should be involved in IAF?

Latanya: Yes. I don't have a problem with the church being involved with IAF at all.

Pastor Greg: Latanya Cunningham, thank you very much for your time.

**Faith Vote Columbus
Transcript
Interview with Deb [REDACTED]**

Pastor Greg: I'm thankful with Deb [REDACTED] to come and share with me in the interview process of my doctoral ministry program with regard to your involvement with IAF. Let's go on with the questions. What was it about the community organizing effort that influenced your involvement with the Voter Registration Project?

Deb [REDACTED]: The fact that it did seem to be very well organized and it didn't waste a lot of time and the time spent was well spent. It wasn't the type of organization where it was a lot of wasted time and a lot of wasted air and you got 3 things accomplished within that 10 hours. I like the fact the time was well spent and it was organized and done in a systematic manner to get certain results. It was well thought out about what needed to be done to get the results we wanted and what was needed to get those results.

Pastor Greg: Out of the 5 issues that were identified with the Asbury membership: Pension, Jobs, Education, Health Care, and Property Tax Relief for Seniors which one of those 5 do you consider to be most important to you.

Deb [REDACTED]: Education and Health Insurance.

Pastor Greg: Could you expound on that just a little bit?

Deb [REDACTED]: Well education because, especially in Ohio, I think that we all realize that racism is a systemic and institutionalized, and I think that the way they have done it here is the same way they have done the _____ with the voter system to get a certain result has been done deliberately to disenfranchise 70% of the population of children. I really think the purpose of that is to maintain status quo so that the powers that be will ensure that their children will inherit their positions. I think they thought that far ahead because I think they thought that they realized where they were going and if it is a fair playing field then the best man will win not necessarily their children.

Pastor Greg: So those two issues

Deb [REDACTED]: The health care. I never grew up in a world where people worried about health care. And I always wondered what happened in the last 25 years and then I realized that Health Care became for profit under rated. And so you have seen the difference and I just think some for the "community good" and not to be for profit. The roads for certain things because everybody has to travel on certain roads so why make them with the cheapest person that build them. And health care is the same thing because at some point who is to say that if an epidemic or something doesn't happen it can spread to everybody. I think that is what happened. I think that is why it was done because I think they did that when small pox and the black plague and history has shown these things that when something becomes air borne everybody is affected.

Pastor Greg: That's interesting. Do you recognize a moral obligation to vote?

Deb [REDACTED]: Yes.

Pastor Greg: Could you expound on that a little bit?

Deb [REDACTED]: The bible says leave unto Caesar what is Caesar's but it recognizes Caesar's authority as ordained or given by God and our participation as citizens is very important to try to be a good citizen in every way. I am also a firm believer in one thing that I quote Nixon on he says, "People deserve the Government they elect." Once they get in it is kind of silly to expect for them to do the right thing. If you know he was a crook from the start then that is on you. I don't get mad at the individuals as much as I do because 70% of the populations sat back and let it happen.

Pastor Greg: In line with what you're saying, Do you see God in the voting process?

Deb [REDACTED]: In a way. In a real big way. In saying that He is over every process and because as always we have choices and in that way as all things it is a moral decision and He gives us choices. Just like choices we make in every aspect of our lives I think that same guideline is expected in voting.

Pastor Greg: Then do you sense the presence of God as you participate in the Voter Mobilization Effort?

Deb [REDACTED]: Yes I did because they were reaching people who were not normally included or trying to reach people. People who were very much impacted and I think like anything else it can start off small and snowball and I think the those people are not paid attention to for a reason because they don't want them to be in power. Like I always said and I tell the people when I'm out there, "Never give a rich man a _____ it doesn't matter who is in the White House."

Pastor Greg: So, do you think it matters to God whether you vote or not?

Deb [REDACTED]: Yes. I think so. It is all your choices that.... I think He gave us dominion and stewardship and that is all a part of it. A part of being a steward, the government, our impact we can have in the government as well as what is happening in our homes, our city, our community, and so I think on every level we are expected to adhere to his expectations of us to be stewards of the earth.

Pastor Greg: You see that, being involved in the voter turnout process as in effect being stewards of the earth. Were you motivated by the Church Initiative to engage in the community voter mobilization drive?

Deb [REDACTED]: Very much so, I felt very good that the church. If the church had not been involved I would not have been involved. That was my force for finding out about the

group. The leadership involved I felt comfortable following the leadership that they had checked everything out to see that it was okay. Secondly, I

Pastor Greg: When you refer to leadership, you mean IAF?

Deb [REDACTED]: No, I mean our church leadership. The people who were involved I respect their opinion you, Vanessa, etc. I know that being politically astute people and being involved in other political processes on all kinds of levels.

Pastor Greg: Has your attitude towards voting changed since your involvement with the Voter Mobilization Drive.

Deb [REDACTED]: Well I wouldn't say it has changed as far as importance. I would say it has changed as far as my cynicism and it has changed as far as my not feeling hopeful.

Pastor Greg: You feel that it has improved those two situations as a result of your involvement in encouraging other people to get out and vote or just being involved in the organization process.

Do you feel that the nonpartisan process works better than working for a campaign or telling people who to vote for?

Deb [REDACTED]: I'm a little "ify" about. I think because the partisan process is so corrupt that I don't see where it is effective it is self serving. Personally I would probably be better off working for the party but as a community—I don't see where that is helping the community. It's a totally different type of thing and one time I see working for the party and one working for the community but now I don't see that I see most of them from this point being self-serving.

Pastor Greg: Do you see a connection in being involved in a nonpartisan organizational organization having the freedom to focus more on issues as opposed to the politician.

Deb [REDACTED]: I like the issue thing. I think I see how it will play out. It is that IAF's goal of increasing voters especially people who didn't vote is a wakeup call to the politicians. I seen that at the event on Sunday. All the elected officials that were there and them seeing all the Unions there, the Synagogues there, and the Methodist there, Baptist, and the Episcopalians, Strickland looked a little shook up to me and I think every politician in there is hearing the drum.

Pastor Greg: The diversity of the body the church, the synagogues, the union, and other entities is really beginning to get the attention of the politicians on a number of issues.

Deb [REDACTED]: I looked at the whole group that was there and each one of those people that were in there not even considering the organizational impact that translates into 5 votes. That is 1500 people and you know it is going to translate into more than that and that is something that they have to think about and it is something that is very unique. I don't think that they had to deal with that in Columbus. Especially Columbus and Ohio. Regardless of my own personal view there are other avenues to deal with the other

specific issues and the other concerned about _____. But I think that particular issue is understanding that they will be held accountable. The rich man in the corporation got one vote. (Section 4:42 of tape.)

Pastor Greg: This is like a grassroots movement there are going to have to really get with and pay attention to.

Deb [REDACTED]: To tell you the truth it has always been grassroots that has always changed everything. King was down with the garbage workers. Rosa Parks was a maid and their very much afraid that this group that we are going after is going to start voting.

Pastor Greg: What persuaded you to become involved in IAF?

Deb [REDACTED]: The organization. I liked the fact that it was well organized. I liked the fact that the people involved were experienced. Especially with this type of an organization. I liked the spirit of the people. I believe deep down inside the intentions are excellent. I think that really impressed me. I think basically I think of the big picture this organization sees the big picture. I also think, regardless of how I come off sometime, is that they understand it is delayed gratification and I appreciate that because you really don't see much emphasis on that anymore. You build it up and it will be a lot bigger today than two years ago, 5 years from now I see totally a major thing continue, ten years from now I see it spreading all over because other people want to see this in the blueprint.

Pastor Greg: Do you think that the church should be involved with IAF?

Deb [REDACTED]: Yes. The main power reason is that it is nonpartisan and I also think to be a nonpartisan it also allows the church to access to have influence as needed once they know your name and they call and say announce ----- is coming see that's is a part of delayed gratification and a part of the big picture. I do believe that the church should be involved because if the church doesn't lead then who is going to lead.

Pastor Greg: You think the church should concern itself to whether people should vote or not? If I were to say that God is much in the pulpit as He would be with me when I vote at the polls. What would your reaction be to that?

Deb [REDACTED]: I hope you recognize that He is.

Pastor Greg: You don't see a disconnect. When you walk into the church and then you walk into the community. You see both of those as being connected with regard to God's presence in your life.

Deb [REDACTED]: It's our spirit and your spirit you take everywhere. I think that is an important thing too. Why the church needs to be involved. Again people see God in us as we represent whatever we are trying to represent. The source of it is God. This is why so many people respond the way they respond because God recognizes their importance in this that they need to be in there voting and we are the face that they are seeing. I

really think that we are representing God's people because people who don't come to church are saying God don't care nothing about me well we are knocking on the door saying God is asking about you.

Pastor Greg: Actually, getting somebody to vote is an indirect witness to let people know that God cares about them. And they should take care of the environment around them as I think you were saying earlier it is a stewardship issue. Thank you for your participation Deb [REDACTED].

**Faith Vote Columbus
Transcript – December 21, 2007
Interview with Carolyn**

Pastor Greg: I want to thank Carolyn for coming to interview with me with regard to her involvement with IAF. I'm going to ask a few questions to get a deeper understanding of the survey questions that you answered before. My first question is did you recognize a moral obligation to vote?

Carolyn : I did and I always have. I have always voted because so many people died for me to have that right. I have always tried to instill that same sentiment into my children. It is an absolute total moral obligation for a black person in this United States of America to vote.

Pastor Greg: Does that mean that you see God in the voting process?

Carolyn : I guess I see God in the whole voting process for an African American. From plight where people gave their lives for me to have the right to vote. For me to have the clear ability to vote where there are no taxes in my way. There are no questions in my way. I have the right to just go to the poll and vote. I think God enabled foreparents; forefathers; foremothers; to help make that change in America. God is part of my going into that booth, and I think God for part of the whole process. I think God is part of the process where we can go out and encourage other people even with so many doubts these days. God is a part for me in that whole process.

Pastor Greg: Do you sense the presence of God as you participated in the Voter Mobilization Effort?

Carolyn : I sense God's presence in my life all of the time. So whatever I'm doing I sense God's presence in my life. He is just ever present. He certainly is a part of everything that I do.

Pastor Greg: The specific answer is yes. So, do you think it matters to God whether people vote or not?

Carolyn : That is a hard question. My commitment is so strong that for me it matters. I see voting as a man made thing I don't know that God cares whether vote or not. I just don't know. I just don't know that voting is that significant to Him but in my commitment and in my life and He is part of me. It is crucial, vital and important. I think He understands that, and I don't think He would feel bad about me if I did not vote. But my commitment is so strong. He is a part of that because He is a part of me for me that is a good thing and that is a good thing for God. But not for everybody else.

Pastor Greg: You don't think that God holds that over the head of everybody. But it is pleasing to God for you to make a commitment as an individual you see that as a part of your moral responsibility. Were you motivated by the Church Initiative to engage in the Community Voter Mobilization Drive?

Carolyn : Very much so. I would not have done that on my own. I consider myself to be quasi activist. If somebody asked me then I will get involved perhaps but it is not a natural thing for me. It is something that I have to really work at and plan to do to be active in that kind of a movement. My personal commitment to vote is very strong. I was highly motivated by that effort coming to this church—my church—and I really felt very strongly about being a part of it. As a result, I gave up my time that I would have committed to other things to be a part of that.

Pastor Greg: What is it the one thing that you can zero in on or one thing about the IAF and the whole Voter Mobilization Effort. What are some or maybe one factor that really motivated you to get involved in that?

Carolyn : There were two things. One being your plea from the pulpit saying: We Need You, This is Important, You said this is important and then Ethel's plea. I need you please come out this is important. Those two things were highly motivating to me. It came to my church and leadership in my church and if you say it is important then I believe it is important. It just ignited that little quasi activism that is in me. That said yes this is something that I'm going to be committed to do. Now the other thing is Vanessa's involvement with the Union. She is very strong and she is very committed to that so I wanted to find out more about what this group was about. So, those three things. But the two things were you from the pulpit and Fulgence.

Pastor Greg: The pastor and the influence of a strong lay person and also the fact you were interfacing with people of different entities not just in church. Unions and different kinds of things. That is what attracted you. Has your attitude toward voting changed as a result of the Voter Mobilization Drive at all?

Carolyn : I am very proud of our effort to be active in that effort. That larger effort. I'm very, very proud of our effort in that. I am so committed to voting and I always have been since I turned 18 years. That has not changed but the element of being active and really putting it into action and our churches participation those things made me very, very proud. I look forward to being a part of it next time.

Pastor Greg: Do you feel that the nonpartisan process works better than on a political campaign. Do you feel that it is the nonpartisan approach that attracted you?

Carolyn : No. It does not. I am a democrat through and through and I want everyone else to be a democrat. So, being nonpartisan is not in my blood. It is not the cloth I am cut from, so unfortunately I have a very difficult time being nonpartisan. I took with me to that poll and I probably wasn't suppose to my voter ballot –democratic ballot. I must honestly say to you several people said to me on the way in. I forgot my ballot. Does anyone have a Democrat you want to borrow it? I replied, "Yes, I do. I am just such a committed democrat that being nonpartisan is not attractive to me. I see where coming from a Christian perspective it is good, but my personal approach unfortunately is far more partisan.

Pastor Greg: Separation of Church and State--Do you feel that there is some logic in our church participating in a nonpartisan effort but it was just trouble for you as an individual.

Carolyn : I fully believe as an individual the separation of church and state.

Pastor Greg: The issue then in the nonpartisan approach of IAF which did not disallow you to vote for whom you wanted to that kind of an issue. Do you feel that your involvement in that organizational effort of nonpartisan approach helped you to talk to the people that you were trying to encourage to get out and vote?

Carolyn : it allowed me to talk to them and in my conversation I certainly repeated the fact that we were nonpartisan. I did abide by that rule and that encouraged them too. I think I was faithful to that.

Pastor Greg: Do you believe that the nonpartisan effort allowed you to focus in more on the issues as opposed to the politician behind.

Carolyn : I consider myself to be pretty-well-read so I have opinions about the issues as well as the politician behind it and I'm not at all inclined to be nonpartisan and that is a huge struggle for me. So that did not allow me to participate more fully etc.... I had to hold myself back from being partisan and being verbally partisan in my canvassing.

Pastor Greg: I think everybody can argue the fact that there were mostly democrats in most of the crowds that we met with. There were some Republicans. Their political persuasion.... Was that healthy to you.

Carolyn : We did not talk politics. So that was a very good discipline. We did not talk about politics. We may have joked around edges.

Pastor Greg: Right. So what was it about the community organizing effort that influences your involvement in the Voter Mobilization Project?

Carolyn : I loved the fact that it was highly organized.

Pastor Greg: Could you expound on that a little bit.

Carolyn : It was so highly organized, and I love things that are organized. They had outlined where we were going to be meeting, what topics we were going to be talking about clearly where we were going to be meeting; clearly what time we were going to be meeting; clearly we need you here; clearly we need x number of people; clearly we identified exactly where you were going to go canvassing who you were going to go canvassing with; we partnered up. It was very organized. I liked that.

Pastor Greg: Even to the point of identifying issues that we were deeply concerned about.

Carolyn : Those issues came from the body although they may have been guided a little bit by that group, but they were very well organized and I really appreciated that.

Pastor Greg: So, which of the 5 concerns that evolved out of Asbury do you think has the most impact on the society around us? Pensions, jobs education, health care, or property tax relief for seniors.

Carolyn : I think education was real import to me and I think it is something that we can influence and make an impact on that issue is one that I think that we could have more success with than the other 4.

Pastor Greg: Could you expound on that value of education as being a ____ that was extremely important to you.

Carolyn : We living here in Columbus, Ohio, have a great deal of concern about our public schools. We have a great deal of concern about the safety of our children in our public schools and the fact that they are truly being taught can they read; can they do math; are they being prepared for the next level in life. I think those are huge concerns to us—Asbury Members as well as Columbus Citizens. I think that our Board of Education headed by Dr. Gene Harris is so close to us and available that I think that we can influence what is going on there and I think the Government that we try to make accountable to (especially as that issue is concerned) heard us that Government and the leaders will take action to resolve some of the educational issues.

Pastor Greg: What persuaded you to become involved in IAF?

Carolyn : I will go back to the Your plea from the pulpit, and Ethel 's plea because I knew nothing about IAF. I knew nothing about the effort until you guys brought it to us.

Pastor Greg: Do you believe then that church should be involved with IAF

Carolyn : Absolutely.

Pastor Greg: Do you think the church concerned about whether or not people vote.

Carolyn : Absolutely. The church is a leader in our lives and in our community and if the church doesn't step up and get involved and say this is what you should do, not just in a religious sphere, but also in the secular area and I think our church leaders have a responsibility to share with people what they think is right the congregation must we are an absolute power. And voting is one thing that we as an African American Congregation must do. There is no if, ands, or buts about it.

Pastor Greg: Let me ask you this, If I were to say to you that God is as much involved in the pulpit as He is in the voting poll. Would you agree or disagree with that.

Carolyn : God is a constant part of my life so He is everywhere, so from my perspective where ever I am God is I do believe that He for me is as much a part of the voting booth process the whole nine yards as He is in the sanctuary and the pulpit. I cannot say that I believe that is the rule for everyone else. I would hope that for all Christians who are in the pulpit that God is ever present with them as well. That would mirror would I am saying for my life but non church attendees I don't know.

Pastor Greg: What I'm really getting at is the connection with members who were not involved with the IAF whether they were limitedly involved or whether they were extraordinarily involved. What I'm getting at is if one could use a religious word like Witness and say that you were as much a witness in the church as you were when you were trying to get people to vote.

Carolyn : And we are called to be witnesses in our daily walk. Wherever we are that means whether we are canvassing our neighborhood or whether that is in our work day; When we play; When we are out to lunch with our buddies; There is absolutely no disconnect. There is no difference. Our life is one continuum and God is part of that.

Pastor Greg: So you could basically have a religious experience encouraging people to vote. I thank you for your interview.

Carolyn : Absolutely.

Transcript
Voter Mobilization Interview with John [REDACTED]
2007

Pastor Greg: I'm happy to interview Mr. John [REDACTED] a lay member here at Asbury North with regard to his involvement with IAF as you know John we had you fill out a survey questionnaire and these are just three main questions that I will ask. Did you recognize a moral obligation to vote?

John: I guess I didn't really see a moral obligation as part of a motivation for going into this. I do think that there is a moral obligation to vote. I think there is a moral obligation for anybody who claims to be religious has an obligation to be involved in the world in a number of ways. Politically is very much a part of that. In explicit recognition of a moral element is not what motivated me to get into Faith Vote Columbus.

Pastor Greg: I just wanted a personal response from you as to whether you felt it is really your moral duty to vote.

John: Not in explicit terms to get involved with IAF.

Pastor Greg: Not in terms of your involvement with IAF. I mean in terms of being a Christian.

John: To Vote, yes. I never really thought of voting as a moral obligation in a religious (Need[kc3] word). I've always felt that I should vote and I needed to vote but I thought of it as moral imperative.

Pastor Greg: Some of the reflections that you already gave indicated that if you were to think about that then you would see that there is a relationship between your relationship with God and the act of voting.

John: Yes.

Pastor Greg: Do you want to expound on that a little bit?

John: I think I do see a moral obligation to be involved in the world in making things better for someone to claim that they are religious and therefore they are going to separate themselves from the world and not be involved in things I think is maybe foolish if not foolish it is shortsighted or not really seeing things. But if you are going to say that you are religious you're going to have Jesus or any religion as the top priority in your life it is incumbent upon you and is a moral imperative to try to make life better for other people. Now, along with that moral obligation there is supporting charities, doing service, assisting other people, there is obeying the laws, there showing respect and affection for people that you encounter day to day and voting and being involved in the political process is part of that.

Pastor Greg: Very Good. It is very clear that you do see a connection between your faith in God and the world. As far as voting is concerned it is a moral obligation because you feel that that could make the world better.

John: Absolutely.

Pastor Greg: Were you motivated by the church initiative to engage in a community voter mobilization drive?

John: Yes. Is this in the context of IAF?

Pastor Greg: Yes.

John: Yes. I very much felt we were contacted by the IAF and I philosophically felt very connected to what they were trying to do. But I also recognize this church (A) needs to become more involved in service and more involved and the community. I think for the benefit of the members for the health of our mission we need to become more involved in the community that we are in within the immediate vicinity of the church. The church needs to be more involved in reaching outside the walls of this church. That is one aspect. The other aspect is we need to raise our profile and as we are attempting to build membership and to draw other people to join us we need to be more of a light on a lamp stand as they say and not hidden under a bushel to draw people to us.

Pastor Greg: You see the connection even of the secular "Turn out to Vote Effort" that IAF presented to us. You see that as being a connection to what you call a "Witness"

John: Yes. I see a connection there of us within the church doing a better job of serving the community I also see an opportunity for the church to be recognized for why it is they came.

Pastor Greg: Has your attitude towards voting changed as a result of your involvement with the Voter Mobilization Movement of IAF?

John: No. But I have always been a 100% solid that everybody able to vote should vote. No if, ands, or buts about it. If you are of age and if you are qualified and eligible to vote you should take yourself down and register and when they open the polling place you should be there voting. I was that way before this and I continue to feel that way.

Pastor Greg: Do you feel that the nonpartisan process works better than working for a political campaign or telling people who to vote for?

John: I don't know that I would say better. I think it is an element that needs to be part of it. I do think that the partisan political process I think is important to have because I think that obviously there are two different candidates who are seeking votes for election the public needs a way to discern the difference between those two, and if there weren't a partisan process the (partisan process is maybe too strong of a word for it) but I think the fact that there multiple people out there putting forth different points of view advocating

different things, advocating different candidates, if that is not fair that the average person or the electorate is not going to be able to perceive who they should vote for. So, that partisan process, I do think, has some points. It needs to be there.

Pastor Greg: This particular effort that we engaged in with Faith Vote Columbus was nonpartisan effort. What it actually did, let me see if you agree with this—did it allow us to focus more on the issues that we could hold the candidates accountable for?

John: Yes it did. I think the nonpartisan approach of going into a targeted part of the community which typically has failed vote or has not voted in appropriate numbers in certain precincts in certain neighborhoods that generally tends to be among racial minorities, economically disadvantaged tend to not vote. I think that going out and consciously seeking to bring those people in is necessary just to give them a perspective of the moral imperative to vote. I think it is important to let them know they have power. Make them feel empowered. Also, I think in that process it also gets them galvanized or focused on the specific issues at hand was an important process that only something like the IAF could do. So I think that having IAF or somebody going out to draw those people into the process to make them aware of the power that they have and to help put some perspective where their interest lie and what they ought to be interested in when they are in their process to vote and who to vote for very much needs to be nonpartisan and that is an extremely valuable part.

Pastor Greg: Very good.

John: I also perceive it the fact that there are democrats and republicans that are out there doing their thing is also a part.

Pastor Greg: I hear that and for the sake of this project I'm focusing in on the IAF. I agree with you the more diverse it is the better. What was it about the community organizing effort that influenced your involvement in the voter mobilization project?

John: Well I was really drawn into it by being in close contact to Ari Lipman very shortly after he came to Columbus.

Pastor Greg: He is one of the staff community organizers of IAF

John: When Ari first came to Columbus as an organizer to give the IAF process initiated II met him within the first week of his arrival and he explained to me what it was that IAF was attempting to do. I saw a great value in what it was they were bringing to this community and I felt that I wanted to be a part of it.

Pastor Greg: I saw a great value and told them to talk to you. So, what about the community organizing part? What is it about the way they moved us toward community organizing that impressed you or did it motivate you or did it, what did it do? If you will recall Bishop Spragg was the first contact we had toward the community organizing piece. He came in and he spoke and he was at that time working for IAF and so he took us down in the basement and broke us into groups. We then identified issues.

John: I was not present for those. I understand that there was a major community organizing piece that took place I attended at Mt. Vernon AME (St. Paul) when we first were discussing issues. That was really the first major event of doing the Community organizing.

Pastor Greg: You mean St. Paul AME. At that point, before that the local entities met amongst themselves Asbury was one of the local entities and there were not just religious institutions there were unions and other entities, but to make a long story short what we did there we identified issues that we felt the Governor should address in our local entities and then at St. Paul we came together to negotiate those issues.

John: It is kind of clear to me now. I am able to remember this a little better. I was not able to be present at the Asbury local session. I don't recall the circumstance, but I do recall as we were planning for that I was involved in the planning but I was not actually there at that meeting, but I was present at St. Paul (because I was having surgery) and for additional meetings I was not able to be there.

Pastor Greg: What I'm really asking. The part that you were involved in up through the date of the election we can't go beyond that because my project doesn't go beyond that. What impressed you about the community organizing piece of IAF?

John: One thing I was very impressed at the commitment of the individual staffers who came to Columbus to work on this and that is a part of it. I was impressed at the individuals who were passionate, who were professional, who were competent, who were skilled and talented and in my opinion who were if they took a more selfish perspective on lives could have been involved in careers which paid them better which gave them maybe more prestige which would give them other assets but those individuals chose to spend in something like the IAF community effort and the other thing I was very impressed with was the resources that were behind those people. It was very obvious that not only those individuals who led a very selfless and competent way of approaching this work were able to do that because there were a lot of resources, a lot of talent, training that had backed them up, so the fact that there was this kind of a commitment and the unselfish approach and being backed up by a very significant amount of resources those two elements just impressed me that this thing could really happen.

Pastor Greg: What about their reaching out to a diverse group for almost like a grassroots movement?

John: Well that seemed to be part of their mission. Their mission seemed to be to draw people—as we discussed—the disadvantaged, the economically deprived; their ultimate interest seems to be to elevate those people. To get them to come out and vote through getting them involved in elections through making them aware of the issues that really matter, or the issues that really affect them they are in think doing a lot of educating of those people because I think frequently the negative things that are going on among racial minorities among the economically disadvantaged etc. It is a part of the education process. I don't think those people really have a good appreciation an awareness of the

factors that really make a difference in their lives and the kind of lives they are able to lead. And I think it really opened those people's eyes in making them aware of what is it really that is separating them what is causing their lives to be less than other people able to enjoy and to live. I really think that the bottom line with the IAF is trying to educate and elevate those people. It is almost like a missionary thing now there (tools) in the hands of the things their dealing with are the political process and the political issues but I think that that really if they are really dealing with the issues that they are addressing I think goes more towards sociological issues and cultural enrichment.

Pastor Greg: The people that were doing the targeting were pretty much middle class people that came out of churches, synagogues and unions they were galvanized to work together as a unit to accomplish just what you're saying.

John: I think goes with what we first started talking about it's a moral imperative. The people who were doing the community organizing, the people were drawing in and pushing in that direction I think were implicitly if not explicitly recognized in that moral imperative to serve our _____

Pastor Greg: And then as far as the Unions, I believe they were recognized that they were completely failing in terms of their effort to turn out the vote. The Union saw this as a fresh new start.

John: The way to achieve what they were trying to get.

Pastor Greg: Which of the 5 concerns although you weren't there. These were the 5 concerns identified at Asbury when we met to discuss issues and were pretty much negotiated very well when we got with the other groups: Which of these 5 would be the most impactful to you: Pensions, Jobs, Education, Health Care, Property Tax Relief for Senior Citizens.

John: I think education. I really think that educating people getting into their heads is what really matters is the most important key. The education is one way of opening people's eyes, and making them vote, giving them awareness making know certain facts; equipping and enabling them to perceive and evaluate what is going on in their lives. Is basically where education goes. If you do these things education if you equip people to know facts and you equip them to analyze those facts then they are going to rise up and do the other things. They are going to make progress towards those other things. I think in the absence of education if you have people who are not really able to comprehend the facts going on around them. They are not able to comprehend and perceive the other problems with pensions and jobs etc. If you find someone who has a good education he is probably not going to have issues—he is going to have issues but he is going to be able to manage the issues and all of those other aspects. A person who is not educated is not going to be able to effectively address those other issues.

Pastor Greg: And thereby get discouraged. Okay. What persuaded you to become involved with IAF?

John: I think that recognizing the IAF project really matched well with what I think that Asbury North needs to be doing. As far as outreach and having a twofold approach. Getting our members involved in the community which I think is the most important thing. We like to come to church and have wonderful worship services but having those services doesn't matter unless we are getting out and getting involved in the lives of _____. I thought that was a good way to get us off of the dime. I thought that was a way to get us to a next step of actually having us serve and it also is going to have visibility.

Pastor Greg: Do you believe the church should be involved in the IAF movement?

John: Absolutely.

Pastor Greg: Do you think the church should be concerned or not about whether people vote?

John: Yes. Absolutely.

Pastor Greg: Do you want to expound on that a little bit?

John: the church needs to be involved in all aspects of people's lives. I think there is a tendency for us sometimes to come into church and say if you pray hard enough everything will be fine and everybody is going to be happy. And I think that is an overly simplistic way to look at the world of religion. Somebody truly religious, becomes aware that through religion, through Jesus Christ and through God all things are possible, but I also think that Jesus called for us to come and follow Him and to be involved. There is the old saying that God helps those who help themselves. So, for us to try to go about saving people involves the spiritual, eternal, and in a sense of their existence here on earth to try to do it all by sitting in church on Sunday morning singing wonderful songs and having a good time a spiritual experiences is not putting the real spirit the real empowerment into action. I think that we need to build up people you can get their hearts into Jesus you need to steps of education and empowerment to make them able to see what is going on around them. To make them aware of the importance of education. To get them involved in educational so they can pursue and develop their skills and make them economically aware. I think we have been talking recently about the fact that maybe people aren't giving to the church because they feel that they don't have the funds, but the church seldom addresses the people. How do you manage the money that you do have? That is an educational piece. Education is very crucial and is the bottom line on everything. However much money you have coming in. There are people who have good jobs and haven't saved a nickel, because they don't really understand economics. There are people who think it's a smart economic move to go out and run up a high credit card interest. High credit card debt and they don't really understand what the implications are of those things. Making them educationally strong and helping them to understand economics and what is going on; helping them to understand what is going on in the political process and who is in office and what kind of things that our politicians are doing, how you affect who is actually in office. How you vote and make them responsive to individual needs. All of these things are going to have an affect on

people's lives. If the church had said we are going to ____ pray hard every Sunday and that is going to be the end of it.....

Pastor Greg: I see God as much in the pulpit as much as I do in the voter's booth?

John: I'm not quite sure I follow what you're saying.

Pastor Greg: Seems to me that you're talking a lot about God is bigger than just the sanctuary experience and that you can witness the presence of God not only in church but also in the community.

John: Absolutely.

Pastor Greg: If we are voting then perhaps it is pleasing to God that we are doing that to make this a better society.

John: I think God is pleased with everything we do in terms of helping ourselves. Developing ourselves. I think God is pleased when we go out and do things to improve our own education; when we do things to improve our own comfort; when we do things to improve our own financial comfort I think that God appreciates that. I think God appreciates not only when we try to elevate ourselves but when we try to elevate others around us.

Pastor Greg: Thank you for your interview.

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